

PLAY



The UK's bestselling gaming magazine

ISSUE NO **187**
THE 2010
PREVIEW
ISSUE

REVIEW

"Silly, inventive, thrilling and sexual..."

Sega's Bayonetta ticks all our boxes

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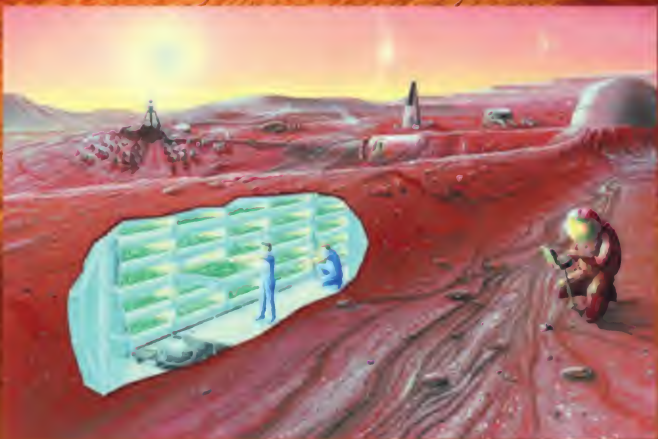


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PlayStation 3 PS2 PSP 演劇端末

Welcome PLAY

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

2010 of the best



As the year draws to a close we, the great people of your beloved **Play** magazine, look to the future of PlayStation gaming. It's a future that

we chronicle in great detail in this very special edition of the magazine by listing our top tens for 2010. There are 20 of them, so that's 20 tens for 2010, then.

Dig down past *God Of War III*, and you'll find there are a few smaller gems to look out for next year

Dig down past the *God Of War III*s and *The Last Guardians*, and you'll find there are a few smaller gems to look out for next year, too. *Just Cause 2* is one such game. Essentially a 'muck about with physics, guns and vehicles' it could be a surprise hit, simply because it's a ton of fun. Then there's the return of *Beyond*

Good & Evil, the Kojima-produced *Castlevania* and the legendary *Twisted Metal*, new IPs like RPG-cum-online shooter *Brink*, 'the game that *Burnout Paradise* should have been' – *Split/Second* – and Ubisoft's disaster movie homage *I Am Alive*. You'd be wise to make a mental note of all the above.

Hey, I'm not going to list all the great games here – that would make our feature pointless – only to say that beyond the triple-A games, the double-A games are looking good and the single-A games, well, they'll keep you happy for hours, too. The triple-B games will

be pretty damn good, too. In fact, I can't think of a time that had so many great games to look forward to – next year will truly be a golden year for gaming.

Nick Jones Editor in Chief

contributors



Jon Gordon

Jon is a Tottenham Hotspur supporter but having been a Spurs supporter for a long time now, he refuses to be optimistic and get carried away in the wake of Tottenham's 9-1 demolition of Wigan Athletic. By the time you read this, Jon predicts that Spurs will have conceded well over nine goals and scored none in the interim period.



Gavin Mackenzie

Gav has been suffering a strange side effect from *Modern Warfare 2*. If he plays it just before bed, he's struck by an intense wave of nausea just as he drops off to sleep, which makes him think he's going to be sick and wakes him up. One time he even threw up over the side of the bed then realised he'd only dreamt doing it. Really weird.



Darran Jones

Darran has been beating all comers at Magic: The Gathering this month. The reason he's unbeatable is that he's the only one dedicated enough to have a £300 deck of Magic cards. We suggested that Darran plant his Magic cards in his back garden to see what happens, but he said that would be a pointless waste.

the PLAY promise

Play solemnly swears (raises right hand) to bring you the best PlayStation magazine that is humanly possible.

We will always bring you the most in-depth, impartial, honest reviews and will never bow down to PR or advertising pressure. We have some of the most experienced reviewers in

the industry and we're not afraid to use them. And we take our own screenshots so you can see what the game looks like *when you play it*. We will be the first to break the biggest stories, the first to cover the biggest games and in the most detailed way. We will only ever bang on about the very best PlayStation games, the ones that we would pay our own cash for. We aren't afraid of expressing an opinion, especially when it's for your benefit.

So don't expect our previews to simply regurgitate a load of internet or press release tosh – we'll be telling you whether a game is looking good or not, regardless of the stage of the code.

We want to fuel your passion for gaming like no other magazine and we want you to trust everything you read here. If you don't then you can simply stop buying it. That's how confident we are that you'll love **Play**. Promise.

PLAY

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FOR 2010

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE BIGGEST PLAYSTATION GAMES OF 2010

The tenth year of the third millennium since years stopped counting backwards and started counting forwards is almost upon us and here at **Play** we've become suitably obsessed with the number '10'. So rather than do one of those preview features that's basically just a really long list of games with pictures, we've done something centred around our new favourite number. We came up with 20 categories then took ten games from each category and ranked them from one to ten. The resulting piece paints a very exciting picture of the year to come, even if you're fairly indifferent to the number '10'. Turn the page to find out which game tops the most important of our 20 tens – the top ten best games of 2010...

10 Of The Very Best

The ten games we think will be the best of 2010

1 GOD OF WAR III

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer SCE Studios Santa Monica ETA March

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY make the battle between the gods and Titans of Greek mythology any more exciting? Why, throwing in an angry Kratos, of course, hellbent on revenge and more than able to exact it. We knew we were looking forward to *God Of War III*, but how much we weren't sure until we got to sit down and have some extended play on the demo. To say it is violent is to make the biggest understatement of all time. To say the action has been ramped up a notch since the second game is to do a disservice to Kratos. And to say we're looking forward to it is to lie: we absolutely, totally and utterly need *God Of War III* right now. We feel empty without it, cold without its embrace and, frankly, we're going down the route of becoming needy.

As you would expect, the whole package returns with flowing, massive combos, brutal close combat, QTEs (don't act like they're a dirty word; *GoW* does them brilliantly) and some fine platforming action. While this would be more than enough for us, as we really have been clamouring for some PS3 Kratos action outside *Everybody's Golf*, the fact that there will clearly be so much more brought to the table has us champing at the bit, frothing at the mouth and generally believing that maybe games aren't so good for our health.

News of challenge rooms or potential multiplayer has yet to be confirmed, but it's another area in which we have great hopes: while we're clearly going to be playing our way through *GOW III* multiple times, the addition of a co-operative mode or DLC would extend the lifetime of the game from a few months to most of the year.

Hurry up and get here, 2010.



2 HEAVY RAIN

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Quantic Dream ETA February

People may disagree with David Cage and his approach to game design, but we don't. *Fahrenheit* had its foibles, but it was a great game, and *Heavy Rain* looks set to take the bar and not just raise it but fling it over a mountain. The M-word is thrown around liberally when describing it, but this truly could be mature, engaging and interesting. Everything we see of *Heavy Rain* makes us want it more, and as long as the sci-fi battles with Mayan sorcerers are kept in check, this will clearly be brilliant.



3 THE LAST GUARDIAN

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Team Ico ETA October

The Last Guardian is the latest from Fumito Ueda and sees a small boy accompanied by a large creature – a cross between a griffin, a cat and others. A relationship will grow between the two until both are dependent on each other. Ueda is aiming for the relationship to be similar to that between the player and Agro – the horse from *SotC* – meaning we're scared something bad might happen to the big chap. But that makes us want this even more. We think this will be one of the best games on PS3, not just of the year.



4 GRAN TURISMO 5

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Polyphony Digital ETA April

We seem to have been writing about this one forever, but we haven't lost any enthusiasm for *Gran Turismo 5*. We might have lost some interest through sheer preview fatigue at one point, but now it's so close we can taste it and we want it. It looks exceptional, it will be the car porn to end all car porn and – whisper this part – it will be a very, very good racing game, of that we have no doubt. Damage, GTTV, 3D effects, real-time weather and whatever else you want to throw in help to make *GT5* a must-have.



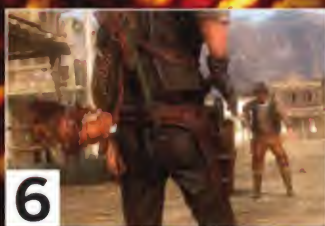
5 FINAL FANTASY XIII

Publisher Square Enix Developer Square Enix ETA March

It's another one we've been writing about forever, having first previewed it in 2006, but this hasn't dulled our expectations for *Final Fantasy XIII*. If anything, it's made us want it more and made us expect the world from Square-Enix's latest in the long-running RPG series. We've been drip-fed info over the years, from the characters through the eidolons, to titbits of the storyline, but we're still in the dark as to what to really expect. But what we do know is that we think *FFXIII* will be one of the best games of 2010, on any format.



2010
According To...
Mercenaries 2
A MILITARY COUP IN Venezuela leads to confrontations between the new military government, the private military personnel of an oil company, and a rebel faction opposed to both forces. The Americans and Chinese also get involved, supporting opposing sides.

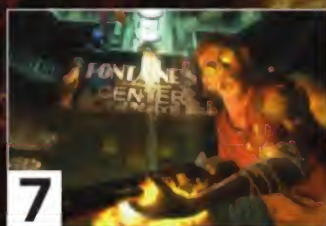


6

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Publisher Rockstar Games
Developer Rockstar San Diego
ETA April

Rockstar is ramping it up a few notches to make the sequel to the once-abandoned Capcom property *Red Dead Revolver*, and from what we've been lucky enough to see of *Redemption*, we know that this is going to be a stunner. It's a looker, it appears to be a fantastic sandbox game and, well, we need more cowboys in games.



7

BIOSHOCK 2

Publisher 2K Games Developer 2K Marin/2K Australia/Digital Extremes
ETA February

Initially, we have to say we were confused – we didn't think the wonderful *BioShock* actually needed a sequel. But the more we read about it, the more we think not only will this be good: it'll be great. While multiplayer may still seem like a bit of a shoehorned-in feature, the rest of this package looks to be just as sublime as the original.



8

AGENT

Publisher Rockstar Games
Developer Rockstar North
ETA October

Announced way back at E3, we still don't know a great deal about *Agent*, Rockstar's Seventies espionage thriller. However, the dev company in question automatically puts it on our 'will be great' radar, and the PS3-exclusivity of *Agent* means it will likely take full advantage of the hardware, without being hamstrung by other formats. It's speculative, but this does have potential.



9

METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

Publisher Konami Developer Kojima Productions
ETA May

When Hideo Kojima reassured the world that *Peace Walker* would be a 'proper' MGS, the game swiftly established itself in the top ten. With his slightly insane creative touch, the continuing story of Naked Snake's change into Big Boss will be one that we simply have to take part in. And we'll be able to take it with us wherever we go on PSP.



10

RESISTANCE 3

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Insomniac Games
ETA October

We're not entirely sure *Resistance 3* will even get a release in 2010, but we maintain some hope. The game hasn't been officially announced, but it clearly exists and we're looking forward to Insomniac once again letting us repel some Chimera scum with well-designed weaponry, batter massive bosses and take part in some fine online multiplayer.

10 PS3 Exclusives

The ten most exciting exclusives coming in 2010

1 THE LAST GUARDIAN

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer Team Ico ETA October

THE LAST GUARDIAN looks set to be the epitome of what makes a great exclusive – it's absolutely nothing like anything you will see on Xbox 360, Wii, PC or any handheld format. It's a game that absolutely cannot be pigeonholed in with other, similar games – there can be no claims that it's simply a *Gears of War* rip-off, a cash-in on the popularity of family games or simply a derivative mess. No, this is a game that is not only exclusive to PS3, but one that makes us give some thought to how games can make us think or feel. Most who have seen it running are already enamoured, and we can't wait to take the game for a spin, if only to see how much we end up caring about the Griffin-o-cat-thing. There's definitely tough competition on the exclusives front, but *The Last Guardian* manages to steal a few yards for victory on the strength of Fumito Ueda's pedigree. It's tough to talk about the game without sounding a bit like an art-git, but the release of this could very well be a defining moment in videogame history. And we get it all to ourselves.



2 GOD OF WAR III

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer SCE Studios Santa Monica ETA March

God Of War III is the powerhouse of the PS3 line-up, ready to decimate all competition and drag the carcasses of the non-believers on a one-way ride to hell. Well, either that or it's a really pretty, really fun blockbuster of a game, and another great reason for owning a PS3.



3 HEAVY RAIN

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Quantic Dream ETA February

One reason we're glad Quantic Dream's *Heavy Rain* is PS3 exclusive is because it means the focus can be on the game itself, on the story, on how things flow and on the wonderful looks. Not on trying to get different console versions running as well as each other.



4 GRAN TURISMO 5

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Polyphony Digital ETA April

2009 belonged to *Forza 3* – we cannot argue that fact. The reign will be short-lived though, as 2010 sees the return of the racing sim master. Petrol heads, as we're sure they like to be called, should be looking forward to this more than anything else in the world.



5 MODNATION RACERS

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer SCE Studio San Diego/United Front Games ETA February

This one may have fallen under a few radars, but there's no denying *ModNation* looks to take advantage of the market created by *LittleBigPlanet*. We doubt the game will be life-changing, but it does have the potential for lasting appeal.



6 DEMON'S SOULS

Publisher SCE/Atlus Developer From Software ETA June

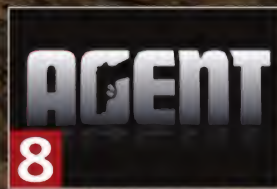
The joy that the Japanese and Americans get from this cannot be understated. *Demon's Souls* can't arrive on our shores fast enough.



7 FINAL FANTASY XIV ONLINE

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Square Enix ETA August

A return to online FF'ing, number 14 could see a console revolution for MMOGs – and we get it to ourselves.



8 AGENT

Publisher Rockstar Games Developer Rockstar North ETA October

We still don't know hardly anything about it, we still reckon it's going to be brilliant, we still have it exclusively.



9 MAG

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Zipper Interactive ETA January

MAG's 256-player online games have the potential to revolutionise console FPSs, and again, we get it all to ourselves.



10 THE AGENCY

Publisher Sony Online Entertainment Developer SOE Seattle ETA October

Another PS3-exclusive MMO and another chance to dominate the online console market. It's been coming for ages: we're still excited.

10 Prettiest Games

Your PS3's graphics processing is sweating in anticipation of these 2010 titles

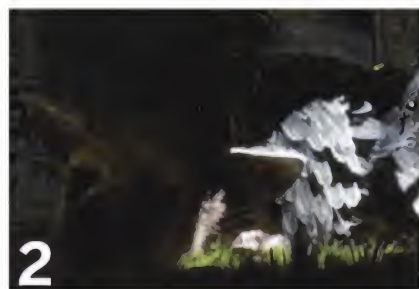
1 GRAN TURISMO 5

Publisher Sony Developer Polyphony Digital ETA April

GRAN TURISMO HAS always been the series that shows what Sony gaming hardware is really capable of, and *Gran Turismo 5* will be no exception. If car porn were regular porn it would be something we couldn't possibly describe here, but needless to say, it would be... ahem... it would... erm... well... you know what we're saying.

Gran Turismo is so pretty it looks better than real life. Polyphony Digital boss Kazunori Yamauchi reckons that making *Gran Turismo* look real wasn't good enough: it had to look better than that. It was to look like those fleeting moments when sunlight filters through at exactly the right angle and intensity to make the world look beautiful – only all the time, not just for a moment.

The result is a thing of digital beauty and wonder that'll have you cooing and aah-ing so hard you'll drown out the sound of the 900 bhp engine roaring away beneath the bonnet of your new Skyline GT-R. Or, if you've only just started playing, your second-hand Suzuki Cappuccino. Mmm... shiny, shiny Skyline.



2 THE LAST GUARDIAN

Publisher Sony Developer Team Ico ETA October

Team Ico is rare among developers in that its games are designed to be beautiful above all else. Not just visually impressive, but actually artistically and aesthetically pleasing. We're not even entirely sure what kind of game it is yet, but that's not the point. Just look at it, it's lovely.



3 HEAVY RAIN

Publisher Sony Developer Quantic Dream ETA February

While *Gran Turismo 5* and *The Last Guardian* deal in fantastical aesthetic ideals, *Heavy Rain* is more about believability, immersion and mood. The most important thing is that the people in the game appear lifelike, which is why *Heavy Rain*'s character models boast unprecedented levels of detail.



4 FINAL FANTASY XIII

Publisher Square Enix Developer Square Enix ETA March

The Japanese games industry might have hit a few stumbling blocks of late, but Square Enix remains a world leader when it comes to incredible animation and overall visual extravagance. No other game in 2010 is going to make you gasp in awe quite as much as *Final Fantasy XIII*.



5 CRYSIS 2

Publisher EA Developer Crytek UK ETA October

The original *Crysis* was the best looking game ever when it launched in 2007, although you needed a serious powerhouse of a PC to actually run it. It's arguably been surpassed by *Killzone 2* since then, but *Crysis 2*, Crytek's first console title, has the potential to raise the bar even higher.



6 ENSLAVED

Publisher Namco Bandai Developer Ninja Theory ETA September

From the creators of *Heavenly Sword*, this retelling of the *Monkey King* legend's visual style has already caught Play's eye.



7 RAGE

Publisher EA Developer id Software ETA September

Technologically *Rage* is a big game – one terabyte of id Tech 5 engine lovin' big – and in games, big tech means great graphics.



8 LOST PLANET 2

Publisher Capcom Developer Capcom ETA February

Massive monsters. Massive explosions. Massive exploding monsters. All of the above look brilliant in *Lost Planet 2*.



9 JUST CAUSE 2

Publisher Eidos Developer Avalanche Studios ETA February

No other game does scale and distance as well as *Just Cause*. It has landscapes so gorgeous you just want to dive headlong into them.



10 MAFIA II

Publisher 2K Games Developer 2K Czech ETA June

Some guy with an Italian accent said he'd whack us if we didn't say this game looked great. Not really, but it does anyway.

10 Engaging Stories

The very best tales, yarns and legends of the coming year

1 HEAVY RAIN

Publisher Sony Developer Quantic Dream ETA February

PLOT, CHARACTER, DRAMA and emotion are pretty much what *Heavy Rain* is all about. David Cage and his team at Quantic Dream are trying to prove that games can marry a strongly told and portrayed story with involving and logical gameplay that draws you further into the world that's been created. It's a marriage that many people still don't believe in and find difficult to comprehend, but that only justifies Quantic Dream's efforts. The greatest challenge is finding a way to tell the story without interrupting the gameplay and your sense of involvement and one of the ways this has been done is through very carefully constructed characters.

Ethan Mars, Scott Shelby, Madison Paige and Norman Jayden promise to be some of the most well-rounded and nuanced characters ever committed to Blu-ray. The development team worked incredibly hard with its actors to get performances that were at once vivid and varied enough to carry the gameplay. The mix of the mundanity of a normal life mixed with the drama of a serial killer on the prowl should help to provoke an emotional attachment to these characters that drives you on through the game and the story. We have high hopes.



2

THE LAST GUARDIAN

Publisher Sony Developer Team Ico ETA October

In the past the genius of Team Ico's games was to be so minimalistic in its storytelling as to draw the player in through pure curiosity and the power of their imagination. We fully expect *The Last Guardian* to follow in these footsteps by telling you little, but teasing a great deal.



3

BIOSHOCK 2

Publisher 2K Games Developer 2K Marin ETA February

Many people still feel unsure about this sequel to one of the generation's most innovative and atmospheric games, but we're feeling confident thanks to 2K Marin's focus on the plot. The first thing it did was work out the themes of the game and built *BioShock 2* around them.



4

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar San Diego ETA April

John Marston, the 'hero' of *Red Dead Redemption* may still be something of a mystery, but we know enough about Rockstar to surmise that his tale of bringing order to a lawless part of the West in 1908 America will be one of the great epic tales of 2010.



5

MAX PAYNE 3

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar Vancouver ETA August

Once again Rockstar's pedigree as a publisher that fosters strong stories and characters is all we really need to know *Max Payne 3* will be excellent, but the clues we've been given about Max's 12-year decline to his state in the game makes it more fascinating. We can't wait.

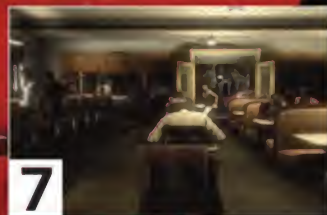


6

FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

Publisher Bethesda Developer Obsidian ETA October

The makers of *Fallout 2* get their hands on the franchise again. That can only mean more gaming gold from *Fallout*.



7

LA NOIRE

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar ETA November

This Forties-set mystery promises to be an intriguing and immersive story and we really can't wait to find out more about it.

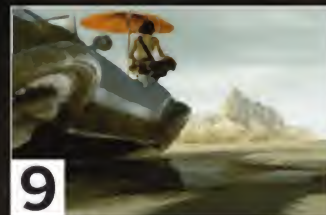


8

AGENT

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar North ETA October

The creators of *Grand Theft Auto* take on the world of espionage in this title set during the Cold War and we're already sold.



9

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL 2

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Montpellier ETA October

If the first game was anything to go by this will be a rollercoaster ride of twists and turns.

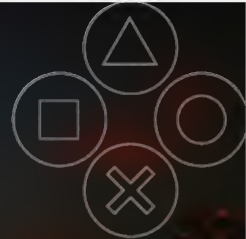


10

DEUS EX 3

Publisher Square Enix Developer Eidos Montreal ETA September

This prequel to the events of the first *Deus Ex* game promises to be a globe-trotting and gripping conspiracy thriller.



10 Bloodbaths

The ten most gruesome, bloody and aggressive games coming to PS3

1 DEAD RISING 2

Publisher Capcom Developer Blue Castle Games ETA April

PROCEDURAL SLICING. IT sounds rather clinical and dull, but in the violence stakes it puts *Dead Rising 2* right at the top of the list. The ability for the engine to work out exactly how a sharp cutting object is hitting the flesh of a zombie and then slice through that flesh regardless of its location on the body is an important addition. We've seen similar things in *Afro Samurai* and even *Fairytale Fights*, but never with this number of characters on screen at once and never with such a variety of different cutting implements to work with.

The digital corn syrup runs freely in *Dead Rising 2* as chainsaws are attached to canoe paddles so that you may wade through a sea of the undead and drills are arranged around buckets so that when the bucket is placed on a zombie's head, carnage ensues. Things get even more gruesome once you enter the multiplayer arena and the world of 'Terror Is Reality' (TIR). This reality TV show pits zombies against metal antlers, chainsaw-adapted motorcycles and giant spheres with players inside. *Dead Rising 2* is taking gore and zombie slaughter to a whole new level.

2010
According To...
Rainbow Six Vegas

MEXICAN TERRORISTS WILL plot an attack on Las Vegas with the help of a counter-terrorist officer. Chemical bombs have been set up in various locations in the city. Thankfully two counter-terrorist teams are able to bring the situation under control.

2

GOD OF WAR III

Publisher Sony Developer SCE Studios Santa Monica ETA March

God Of War violent? Well, yes, that's pretty much the point of Kratos and his rampage through Ancient Greece, isn't it? He's spent two games laying waste to the armies of the gods and titans, throwing in a few civilians for good measure and now he's *really* mad.

4

EA SPORTS MMA

Publisher EA Developer EA Tiburon ETA August

While many of the other games on this list will shock and horrify purely through exaggeration, *EA Sports MMA* promises to make you cringe with its realism. With all the brutality of mixed martial arts merged with the unequalled realism of the *Fight Night* engine, this is going to be one tough game.

3

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR

Publisher Sega Developer Rebellion ETA February

When two of the most ruthless and vicious creatures in the known galaxy clash you can pretty much guarantee a sea of blood will be left in their wake and such is the case with *AVP*. The trophy kills of the Predator and stealth kills of the Alien are particularly gruesome.

5

DEAD TO RIGHTS: RETRIBUTION

Publisher Namco Bandai Developer Volatile Games ETA March

This rebooting of the *Dead To Rights* series may not be garnering much attention at the moment, but its aggressive hand-to-hand combat, bloody gunplay and vicious ragdoll physics may get some heads turning. So will the inclusion of a rather aggressive AI attack dog as your partner.

6



TWISTED METAL

Publisher Sony Developer Eat Sleep Play ETA October

David Jaffe and his new company have been teasing a return to *Twisted Metal* and past experience promises one violent piece of software.

7

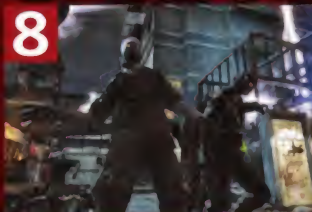


KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS

Publisher Square Enix Developer IO Interactive ETA August

If this criminally minded pair's first outing is anything to go by, this could be one of the most brutal games of the year.

8



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR 2

Publisher Activision Developer Treyarch ETA November

Another year brings another *COD* and Treyarch's last effort showed a real vicious streak. Expect more of the same.

9



FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

Publisher Bethesda Developer Obsidian ETA October

The world of *Fallout* is not a pretty or friendly one and the chances of being hit in the face with someone's brain matter are pretty high.

10



DEAD SPACE 2

Publisher EA Developer Visceral Games ETA October

The last *Dead Space* game was very well received, guaranteeing a sequel, but this sort of gore fest has to up the ante to survive.

10 New IPs

The very best new titles and ideas in 2010

1 RAGE

Publisher EA Developer id Software ETA September

IT'S BEEN A LONG time since id Software was working on a new intellectual property, and perhaps that's why the anticipation for this game is so high. This company is known for pushing the boundaries of technology, and by launching this game alongside the new id Tech 5 engine, we expect something special. As it is, *Rage* conjures up comparisons with games like *Fallout*, *MotorStorm* and others. This is a post-apocalyptic world, with a hero who's been isolated from the destruction taking his first steps in the ruined Earth. But *Rage* should be far more than the sum of its similarities.

Despite its conversations and driving, *Rage* remains at its core a traditional id FPS. It is perhaps subtler than *Doom*, *Quake* or *Wolfenstein*, but no less epic, brutal or compelling.

You emerge several years after an asteroid has destroyed the surface of the Earth, having been frozen in an 'Ark', but those who were saved with you have all died. You have actually been woken up earlier than intended, and the surface world is very different from what was expected. What follows promises to be a very original and exciting adventure.



2

I AM ALIVE

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Shanghai ETA September

Ubisoft's latest title is unique for not being a Tom Clancy game, about a Middle Eastern prince or set in the past, but it's still a little up in the air. A change in developer from Drakworks to Ubisoft Shanghai has resulted in a delayed release from what we were expecting for this survival game.



4

BRINK

Publisher Bethesda Developer Splash Damage ETA September

With a strong history of multiplayer focused gaming in its past, anything new and original from Splash Damage is worthy of our attention, and *Brink* is particularly eye-catching. Its mix of single-player and multiplayer gaming and arresting art style make it a game to watch.



3

MAG

Publisher Sony Developer Zipper Interactive ETA January

As groundbreaking new IPs go, they certainly don't come any bigger or as ambitious as *MAG*, with its 256 players and world-changing online play. Its high levels of military organisation and tactics promise to shake up online shooters like no other FPS before it. It's going to be massive.



5

ENSLAVED

Publisher Namco Bandai Developer Ninja Theory ETA September

The makers of *Heavenly Sword* are being quite ambitious with this AI co-op adventure, based on an old Chinese tale that also inspired the TV show *Monkey*. With Andy Serkis on board again for mo-cap and the experience of *Nariko's* adventure to draw on, expect something special.



2010
According To...
District 9
ALIENS HAVE BEEN living among us or more accurately in South Africa, but infection of a human with an alien virus leads to a confrontation between the human organisation containing the extraterrestrial presence and inhabitants of the alien camp, District 9.



6

AGENT

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar North ETA October

As Rockstar North's first new title since *Manhunt* in 2003 and off the back of *GTA IV*, new IPs just don't come much bigger.

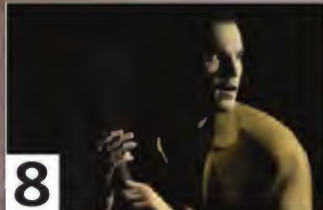


7

SPLIT/SECOND

Publisher Disney Interactive Developer Black Rock Studio ETA April

Think *Burnout* with lots of dynamite. Black Rock is making a name for itself with new racing titles after *Pure*.

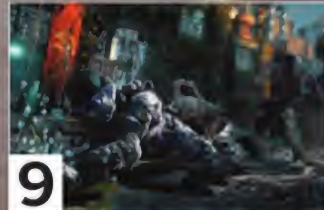


8

LA NOIRE

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar ETA November

This new Rockstar game has been a long time in the making, but you have to assume the wait will have been worth it.



9

SINGULARITY

Publisher Activision Developer Raven Software ETA February

After years of licensed titles and sequels, Raven has finally been set free, and this time-twisting shooter is the result.



10

INVERSION

Publisher Namco Bandai Developer Saber Interactive ETA August

This gravity-defying shooter may seem derivative at first, but the beating heart of innovation lies beneath.



10 Comebacks

The games and heroes returning in style in 2010

1 MAX PAYNE 3

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar Vancouver ETA August

MAX PAYNE HAS been away for a long time (as long as you don't count his silver screen appearance), but he remains one of the most iconic action heroes in videogame history. He's gained a few pounds and lost some of his hair, but then haven't we all. The last six years have been rough on all of us, but for Max it's been twice that long since the events of *Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne*, and the figurative misfortune of our hero has become very real. The lean, mean, shooting machine has seemingly taken to some pie-eating contests, and spent far too much time rubbing his head in confusion and despair. You have to feel for him really.

Seemingly escaping the continued tragedy of his life in New York, we'll be joining Payne in São Paulo, Brazil working as a hired gun for a rich family. Of course, being who he is, things won't stay calm and peaceful for long, and the situation will escalate into something even more haggard and troubling than Payne's own appearance. Few characters have gone through such a transformation, but this only makes Payne's return next year more exciting. We've got a feeling this will be more than a comeback, and actually be the most involving and adrenaline pumping *Max Payne* tale yet. Bring on the slow-mo.



2 FINAL FANTASY XIII

Publisher Square Enix Developer Square Enix ETA March

It hasn't been all that long since *Final Fantasy XII*, but it feels like an age. Perhaps that has something to do with the protracted release of *Final Fantasy XIII*, which seems to have been in development since the turn of the century. As the first *FF* of the generation, it should set a new RPG benchmark.



3 MAFIA II

Publisher 2K Games Developer 2K Czech ETA June

Mafia's first outing on PlayStation 2 was not all that well received. The PC port was not the best, and gameplay felt lumbering next to *GTA: San Andreas*, released the same year. *Mafia II* however, is one of the best looking and most carefully constructed games we have ever seen.



4 CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW

Publisher Konami Developer MercurySteam ETA October

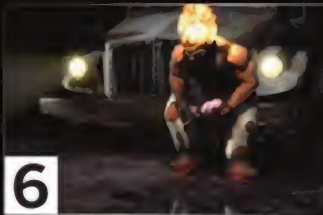
We're hoping for a comeback in form for *Castlevania* as much as anything else, and this more action focused title, with the help of Hideo Kojima, could be a spin-off for the franchise that pays off. Don't expect another *Symphony Of The Night*, but something special may be brewing.



5 METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

Publisher Konami Developer Kojima Productions ETA May

Naked Snake finally returns in this sequel to the much loved and lauded *Snow Eater* on PS2, and while the format may be a surprise, we've already had a taste of how good *MGS: Peace Walker* will be on PSP. It's clear the limitations of the hardware mean nothing to Kojima.



6 TWISTED METAL

Publisher Sony Developer Eat Sleep Play ETA October

David Jaffe's return to *Twisted Metal* has been much anticipated and the timing couldn't be better. We need some carnage.



7 THIEF 4

Publisher Square Enix Developer Eidos Montreal ETA November

Thief's unique blend of stealth gameplay and an intriguing steampunk world is always a joy to immerse yourself in.



8 DEUS EX 3

Publisher Square Enix Developer Eidos Montreal ETA September

Eidos Montreal is busy with two huge franchises, but this cyber-punk thriller promises to be one of the games of the year.



9 BEYOND GOOD & EVIL 2

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Montpellier ETA October

Jade and Pey'j may not have done so well last time, but discerning gamers have been praying for this sequel.



10 THE LAST GUARDIAN

Publisher Sony Developer Team Ico ETA October

The return of Team Ico is a momentous occasion for the PS3, as Japan's most imaginative studio looks to strike gold again.

10 War Bringers

War continues to be as popular as ever

1 GOD OF WAR III

Publisher Sony Developer Sony Santa Monica ETA March

HOW COULD WE not put *God Of War* at the top of our war top ten? It would, quite literally, be blasphemy. Kratos would have kicked our arses. The third instalment of Sony's epic hack-'n'-slash series is riding high in many of our 20 top tens, including the best one of course, but it's war that truly defines what Kratos is all about.

All that modern stuff, and by 'modern' we mean anything involving guns, is for wimps. It's not proper war unless you get covered in your defeated enemy's blood when you kill him, her or it. Never mind all this planning and tactics and teamwork and strategy, war should be about heroes. And when we say 'heroes' we don't mean people who put themselves at risk for the greater good, we mean people who are really good at killing things. Like Kratos.

Kratos can kill pretty much anything you throw at him, big or small. Even the Gods of Olympus themselves, and things don't get much bigger than them. The titans are nearly as big though and Kratos has their assistance in his war on Olympus. It's definitely going to be the biggest, best war ever.



2

CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR 2

Publisher Activision Developer Treyarch ETA November

It's not been announced, but we reckon *COD's* Treyarch/Infinity Ward, WWII/present-day cycle is as fundamental to the way we make sense of the world as the summer/winter or night/day cycles. Therefore, 2010 has to be a WWII year.



3

MAG

Publisher Sony Developer Zipper Interactive ETA January

Okay, so the war of Olympus is very big, as is World War II, but neither of them involves 256 players in one match. For that, you need the *Shadow War*, setting for *MAG*, an online shooter that supports more players per battle than any other ever.



4

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

Publisher EA Developer DICE ETA March

After branching out and experimenting a bit with *Mirror's Edge*, DICE is back doing what it knows best – anarchic multiplayer war games. *Modern Warfare 2* might be the best, but *Battlefield* games still have an 'anything goes' feel that remains unique to the series.



5

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: PREDATOR

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft ETA April

This gaming generation began with a rash of Clancy shooters, with two *Ghost Recon*s and two *Rainbow Six*s in two years. It's been very quiet since *Vegas 2*, but Ubisoft has confirmed that *Ghost Recon: Predator* is due next year.



6

R.U.S.E.

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Eugen Systems ETA February

A war game from Ubisoft that doesn't carry the Tom Clancy brand. The twist here is that your most powerful weapon is deceit.



7

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS FIRETEAM BRAVO 3

Publisher Sony Developer Slant Six Games ETA January

This latest game in the *Fireteam Bravo* series has you hunting an ex-KGB agent believed to have WMDs.



8

CRYSIS 2

Publisher EA Developer Crytek ETA October

The original *Crysis* took place on one island, but there were clues to suggest that the aliens were intent on a global invasion. War, here we come.



9

LOST PLANET 2

Publisher Capcom Developer Capcom ETA February

The war against the Akrid continues, this time in the jungles of E.D.N. III, which has experienced global warming at an alarmingly fast rate.



10

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR

Publisher Sega Developer Rebellion ETA February

Should be called '*Aliens Vs Predators Vs Marines*' as it's about perhaps sci-fi's best loved 'war triangle'.

10 PSP Games

Another year, another renaissance for the PSP

1 METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

Publisher Konami Developer Kojima Productions ETA May

UNLIKE THE EARLIER *Metal Gear Solid* games on PSP, *Peace Walker* is the real deal. We liked *Acid* and *Portable Ops*, but the chance to have a proper MGS experience on the go – with up to three friends – is one we've been eagerly anticipating for a long time. From the play time we've had with *Peace Walker*, we can safely say that it both works and is definitely a true *Metal Gear* game; the suitably insane/elongated opening sequence is testament to that. Controls may be an issue for some, but that does come with the territory when it comes to PSP, and Hideo Kojima and co are making sure they offer a number of options for players. As for story? Well, *Peace Walker* is a continuation of arguably the

best story in the *Metal Gear Solid* series, from the third game, and sees Naked Snake continue his inevitable journey towards becoming Big Boss. It'll be incomprehensible in parts, the anti-war message will be as ham-fisted as it is well-meaning and a lot of people will snort derisively in its direction, but shut up: it's *Metal Gear*.



2010
According To...
The Simpsons

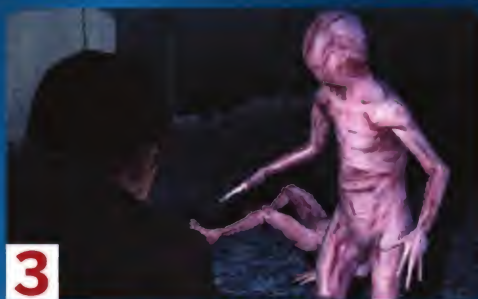
LISA SIMPSON WILL get engaged to an Englishman she meets at university. However, after meeting her family he'll reveal that he intends for them to move to England after the wedding and never see the Simpsons again. Lisa decides to call off the wedding.



2 VALKYRIA CHRONICLES 2

Publisher Sega Developer Sega
ETA July

The original may be fast becoming a victim of its own cult hype, but there's no denying it is an excellent game. The chance to play a sequel is one thing, but a sequel we can take with us anywhere? Sega is on to a winner with this portable SRPG.



3 SILENT HILL: SHATTERED MEMORIES

Publisher Konami Developer Climax Studios
ETA February

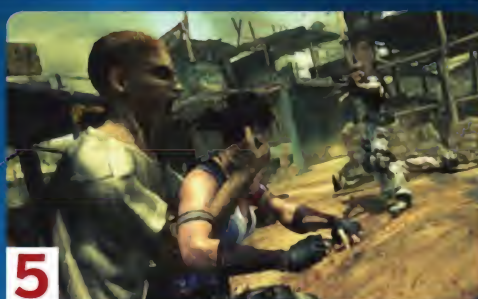
Silent Hill: Origins was a well-made entry in the series, so we've some hope for *Shattered Memories*. A re-imagining of the first game with everything you'd expect updated: we're ready to be scared.



4 HALF-MINUTE HERO

Publisher XSEED Games Developer Marvelous Entertainment ETA February

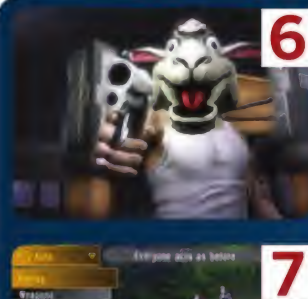
It's been out in America for a while so we've had a chance to play this one a fair bit. Frankly, it's excellent: quirky, funny, more varied than you'd expect (each level lasts 30 seconds, after all) and absolutely perfect for PSP. Hopefully this one won't just be lost in the mix.



5 RESIDENT EVIL PSP

Publisher Capcom Developer Capcom
ETA October

We know nothing of this one bar some very basic, unspecific info. Apparently it will be an original *Resi* title, made with PSPgo in mind and, according to Chris Kramer of Capcom, is "totally different for a *Resident Evil* game". We await this one with bated breath.



6 SAINTS ROW

Publisher THQ Developer Volition
ETA September

Although officially unannounced, we're pretty sure that *Saints Row* will be making its way to PSP next year. Dumb fun on the go.



7 SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: PERSONA

Publisher Atlus Developer Atlus
ETA March

The remake of a 13-year-old RPG has been received well abroad. We're just waiting for it to actually get to the UK.



8 PLAYSTATION ROOM

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer SCE Japan
ETA May

PSP's version of Home, this has a chance to make the interesting online hub a great deal better for everyone.



9 BLAZBLUE PORTABLE

Publisher PQube Developer Arc System Works
ETA November

The high-resolution visuals may become lower res, but additional modes could make *BlazBlue Portable* the PSP brawler of choice.



10 SOCOM: US NAVY SEALs FIRETEAM BRAVO 3

Publisher Sony Developer Slant Six Games
ETA January

We've never been too up on our *SOCOM* games, but *Fireteam Bravo 3* could change all that.

10 Style Icons

The movers, shakers and trend-setters of the New Year

1 RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar San Diego ETA April

IF THERE'S ONE thing that Rockstar always knows, it's style, which this top ten will attest to as you read on, but the strongest of its line-up thus far for 2010 is clearly *Red Dead Redemption*. If the release of this Western blockbuster doesn't lead to a new wave of cowboys on the PS3 and a craze for Wild West-themed fancy dress parties we'll be very disappointed. After all, this is a game that has all the makings of a great romantic ode to the Old West and the ways of the frontier life.

Set in 1908, *Red Dead Redemption* is on the cusp of the modern era, when the West coast of the US had barely been tamed. In keeping with this theme the game's hero, John Marston is also untamed, but looking for a way to find civility in his life by bringing law and order to the furthest reaches of America. Throw in the fact that Marston is a snappy dresser, plus a few dramatic sunsets over the prairie, and we think you'll find there are few places you'd rather spend your time than in this game.



2

BRINK

Publisher Bethesda Developer Splash Damage ETA September

At first we found *Brink's* art style to be a little odd and even jarring, but over a short space of time it has really grown on us. There's something about its comic book proportions and bright visuals that really sells it as a place to have fun and kill stuff. 2010's *Borderlands* perhaps?



3

DEAD RISING 2

Publisher Capcom Developer Blue Castle Games ETA April

Much like the original game, *Dead Rising 2* looks to feature a wide array of outfits and accessories for hero Chuck Greene to change into, and if there's anything as snappy as Frank West's brown suit and trilby combo, he'll be the fashion icon of the year. Cowboy boots and hat are included.



4

MODNATION RACERS

Publisher Sony Developer United Front Games ETA April

Urban vinyls are cool. Fact. Sony and United Front Games think so too, and that's why they looked to them for inspiration when designing the latest play, create, share title, *ModNation Racers*. Your driver, car and tracks can all be designed by you with limitless possibilities.



5

LA NOIRE

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar ETA November

In terms of influences from the cinema, there are few genres that can match film noir for its atmosphere and style. That's what Rockstar will be looking to draw upon for this Fortie-set mystery full of tough-talking and heavy-punching investigators, and sassy femmes fatales.



6

SKATE 3

Publisher EA Developer Black Box ETA May

With even more creative freedom and design tools, this year *Skate* will be more of a trendsetter than ever before.



7

ENSLAVED

Publisher Namco Bandai Developer Ninja Theory ETA September

Ninja Theory does good costumes, but its real style comes from the animation, which we expect to be superb.



8

METAL GEAR SOLID: RISING

Publisher Konami Developer Kojima Productions ETA November

We're expecting big things from *MGS: Rising* with its strong pedigree and potentially genre-bending gameplay.



9

MAX PAYNE 3

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar Vancouver ETA August

Max may not be looking his best, but in our opinion there is nothing more stylish than slow-motion gunplay.



10

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL 2

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Montpellier ETA October

The French know a thing or two about fashion, and the original *BG&E* was a very classy game. Expect more of the same.



10 Terrifying Tales

The ten games of 2010 to scare us silly

2010
According To...
Street Fighter 2010

TECHNOLOGY WILL ADVANCE to the point we can travel between planets in moments, and 'Cyberplasm' gives super strength to any organism. It's invented by Ken from *Street Fighter* (explains why it's so cheap).

1 ALIENS VS PREDATOR

Publisher Sega Developer Rebellion ETA February

REBELLION'S ORIGINAL *AVP* on PC was, quite simply, one of the scariest games ever made – when you played as a marine. It used an incredible mix of your own imagination, standard 'BOO!' scares and the fact that you were woefully underpowered compared to your quarry to induce dread. Panic, trepidation and shock combined to terrify players in ways we'd never been terrified before. This is why we've picked the new *AvP* as the scariest game of 2010 – it's the developers of the first terror-fest, Rebellion, at the helm and the team includes many who helped make the original game.

As long as what made the original so petrifying is kept in the back of the developers' minds at all times, and as long as the ridiculous, bombastic excess of many modern action games is eschewed, this is guaranteed to be one of the most chilling gaming experiences of the year. Throw in the less terrifying campaigns of the *Alien* and *Predator* and some great-looking multiplayer, and we have a game with real potential. Who knows – it might even make a certain member of the team fall off their chair when they get attacked by a Facehugger. Again.



2 DEAD SPACE 2

Publisher EA Developer Visceral Games ETA October

The original game made us jumpy, and those things really got in our head – they moved weird. EA has a bit of a cult classic to build on, and won't need to change much to make a worthy sequel. And remember: headshots aren't the way.



3 BIOSHOCK 2

Publisher 2K Games Developer 2K Marin/2K Australia/Digital Extremes ETA February

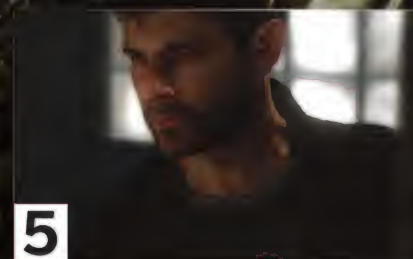
We thought it wouldn't be as frightening as the first, because in *BioShock 2* you take control of a Big Daddy. But the introduction of the Big Sister changed all this, making us fear we'll again be haunted by terror while exploring Rapture.



4 I AM ALIVE

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Shanghai ETA September

A switch in developers and few new details popping up may have us slightly worried, but it pales in comparison to our fear of the devastating natural disasters in *I Am Alive*. It looks to be pure, absolute survival – nothing else.



5 HEAVY RAIN

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Quantic Dream ETA February

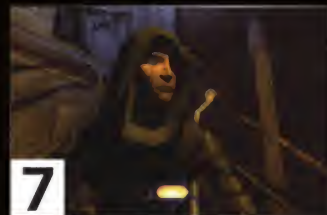
Quantic Dream is going for the emotional route with *Heavy Rain*, so we assume they'll aim to frighten us: being pursued by or pursuing a serial killer won't be light-hearted japey. This has the chance to create great psychological scares.



6 SILENT HILL: SHATTERED MEMORIES

Publisher Konami Developer Climax Studios ETA February

Silent Hill: Origins used headphones to good effect. This could be another game that makes us panic on buses.



7 THIEF 4

Publisher Square Enix Developer Eidos Montreal ETA November

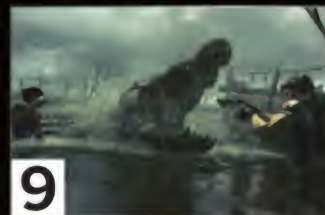
The Cradle from *Thief 3* turned out to be one of the scariest levels on any game ever. Here's hoping we'll see that repeated with *Thief 4*.



8 CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR 2

Publisher Activision Developer Treyarch ETA November

The first *WaW* was distasteful, but it highlighted the horrors of war. The second should hopefully take it up a notch.



9 RESIDENT EVIL 5: ALTERNATIVE EDITION

Publisher Capcom Developer Capcom ETA April

You know what to expect really: downloadable, additional scares for the survival horror jump-a-thon. Nothing new, but still menacing.



10 FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

Publisher Bethesda Entertainment Developer Obsidian Entertainment ETA October

We know little about *New Vegas*, but *Fallout 3* did a great job instilling eerie dread in everyone who played it.

10 Future Shocks

The best games of the future... in 2010

2010
According To...
2010

THE HUMAN RACE will not only be sending space shuttles to Jupiter to investigate strange phenomena but will lose them too, resulting in a second mission to find out what happened. Meanwhile the US and the USSR (it came back) are at war.

1 BIOSHOCK 2

Publisher 2K Games Developer 2K Marin ETA February

IT MIGHT NOT be futuristic or be set in space, and it might not feature an alien invasion or a post-apocalyptic wasteland, but *BioShock 2* is still very much a sci-fi experience in the traditional, very pre-*Star Wars*, HG Wells and Jules Verne way.

Many early sci-fi works dealt not just with fantastical technology and alternative worlds, but self-consciously reflected political, philosophical and ideological issues and *BioShock* was faithful to that tradition. Rapture is an illustration both of the great things and of the terrible things an elitist meritocracy might achieve, but *BioShock* was always less about the specific philosophy behind Rapture's creation, and more about the blind idealism that took it to self-destructive extremes and *BioShock 2* expands upon this theme.

As is often the case in unstable societies, the collapse of one dysfunctional regime has triggered the rise of an ideologically opposed, but no less extreme replacement. In *BioShock 2*, set ten years after *BioShock*, Rapture is run by an ultra-altruistic leader, Sophia Lamb, who believes in sharing and equality for all. No matter what. It's all going to go wrong again, and you're the Big Daddy that's going to sort it out.



2

DEAD SPACE 2

Publisher EA Developer Visceral Games ETA October

Visceral Games has confirmed that a sequel to last year's dark horse of the year is in the works, so if you like your horror with lots of dismemberment and gore, but not so much gravity or air, then you're in for another treat.



3

CRYSIS 2

Publisher EA Developer Crytek ETA October

The nanosuit might look like the stuff of pure, futuristic sci-fi but it's actually inspired by real-life US military design concepts. We reckon the CryEngine 2 engine driving the game itself is the most futuristic thing about it.



4

DEUS EX 3

Publisher Eidos Developer Eidos Montreal ETA September

Classic sci-fi themes abound in the *Deus Ex* series with cybernetics and 'big brother' paranoia playing major roles. This *Deus Ex* will be a bit less sci-fi than the other two, given that it's a prequel set 25 years before the first game.

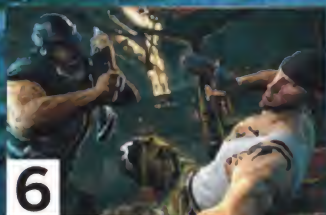


5

RAGE

Publisher EA Developer id Software ETA September

99942 Apophis is a real asteroid that scientists claim still has a slim chance of hitting the Earth in two or three decades' time. Rather than getting scared, id has just made a game about what the world might be like after the impact.



6

BRINK

Publisher Bethesda Developer Splash Damage ETA April

Waterworld but with online multiplayer team-based battles instead of Kevin Costner. We know what we'd rather have.



7

ALIENS VS PREDATOR

Publisher Sega Developer Rebellion ETA March

Between them, *Aliens* and *Predators* exemplify what sci-fi means these days. No wonder even more games about them are due for release.



8

LOST PLANET 2

Publisher Capcom Developer Capcom ETA February

Is this going to be a stand-up fight, sir, or just another bug hunt? *Lost Planet 2* is a bit of both really, although the Akrid don't literally stand up.



9

ENSLAVED

Publisher Namco Bandai Developer Ninja Theory ETA September

A futuristic, post-apocalyptic setting combined with a story that's been around for over a thousand years, *Enslaved* is an intriguing prospect.



10

SINGULARITY

Publisher Activision Developer Raven Software ETA February

A rare original IP from Activision odd-job studio Raven Software. It's a bit like *Wolfenstein* but more Cold War than World War II.

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10 Japanese Games

The best ambassadors from gaming's heartland in 2010

1 FINAL FANTASY XIII

Publisher Square Enix Developer Square Enix ETA March

IS THERE A series in the history of this industry more heavily associated with Japan than *Final Fantasy*? We would argue that there is, not and it has a great deal to do with the way in which it has been defining and then evolving the Japanese RPG for the last 22 years. It is the template that all Japanese developers refer to and the yardstick by which they are always judged. Some come close, but none illicit the same levels of anticipation and devotion as *Final Fantasy*.

This series has always been a leader rather than a follower and *FFXIII* is not letting the side down in the least. While staying true to the tone and feel of *Final Fantasy*'s past it is also pushing in new directions with its combat systems and exploration. It is also pushing the boundaries of videogame graphics as the series has done so often over its illustrious history. Only the passing of this new decade will tell us how much this game will affect the rest of the industry, but we fully expect *Final Fantasy XIII* to be as much of a trendsetter in Japan as it has always been.

2 METAL GEAR SOLID: RISING

Publisher Konami Developer Kojima Productions ETA November

The *Metal Gear* series has always been an interesting mix of East and West, but *Rising* and its expected focus on action rather than stealth could well be a very Japanese affair. Raiden couldn't be more of a Japanese archetype, with his androgynous good looks and cyborg body.

3 SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

Publisher Capcom Developer Capcom ETA March

Japan is the home of all of the great beat-'em-ups and *Street Fighter* is clearly the master of them all, therefore an improved version of *Street Fighter IV* must be the greatest brawler of all time. Does our logic work there? We're pretty sure it does and we're also pretty sure that *Super Street Fighter IV* will be excellent.

4 NO MORE HEROES: HEROES' PARADISE

Publisher TBA Developer Grasshopper Manufacture ETA May

We're expecting a wave of Wii ports to come to PS3 once the motion controller launches. *No More Heroes* is jumping the gun, however, upgrading to HD and a PS3 pad. Add its great humour and cool looks and we have a winner.

5 THE LAST GUARDIAN

Publisher Sony Developer Team Ico ETA October

As the excellent *Shadow Of The Colossus* and *Ico* both proved, Team Ico knows how to build upon and play around with Japanese design staples in a way that is totally engrossing. For *The Last Guardian* we are expecting a mix of classic action-adventure gaming with some Studio Ghibli heart.

6 QUANTUM

Publisher Tecmo Koei Developer Team Tachyon ETA March

Another Japanese title looking to ape Western shooter design, but with the addition of an elegant Japanese-style sidekick character.

7 DEMON'S SOULS

Publisher TBA Developer From Software ETA June

As a Japanese take on how to make an online co-operative and competitive Western-style RPG, *Demon's Souls* is unique and essential.

8 YAKUZA 4

Publisher Sega Developer Amusement Vision ETA November

A Western release of this contemporarily set *Yakuza* sequel has been hinted at and we'll be watching it very closely.

9 NIER REPLICANT

Publisher Square Enix Developer Cavia ETA August

More ambiguously gendered heroes in an action-adventure setting makes *Nier Replicant* more Japanese than most.

10 GRAN TURISMO 5

Publisher Sony Developer Polyphony Digital ETA April

As Japanese exports go they don't come much more influential or respected than *Gran Turismo* and *GT5* will make waves again.

2010
According to
Psychic Force

PSYCHICS WILL EMERGE around the world with various psychic abilities. These so called Psychiccers will be drawn into a battle for the fate of the entire planet as a shady organisation looks to take over the world using psychics. Much fighting then ensues.



10 History Lessons

Days of yore brought to life in 2010

1 MAFIA II

Publisher 2K Games Developer 2K Czech Interactive ETA June

AS RE-CREATIONS OF days gone by go, *Mafia II* is looking like the most accurate and respectful coming to PS3 next year. 2K Czech (as Illusion Softworks) proved before with *Mafia: The City Of Lost Heaven* that it could create a deep and detailed world. While PS2 gamers didn't get the greatest port in the world, the PC version was widely acclaimed for its realism and scale. *Mafia II* is building upon this tradition, but also setting things straight as far as the console versions are concerned, which we can promise you look superb.

The game has moved from Lost Heaven to Empire Bay, which itself is a mixture of New York, Chicago, Detroit and San Francisco. The game world is only ten-miles square, but 2K Czech has promised over 100 indoor environments, full weather systems and a visible passing of time. Throw the amazing graphical prowess of the Illusion engine into that mix and *Mafia II* is a very attractive proposition indeed. Its re-creation of Forties and Fifties America is something special and the closest you'll come to a time machine on PS3.



2

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar San Diego ETA April

Rockstar's *Red Dead* sequel has been wowing us from the moment we laid eyes on it thanks to its wonderfully detailed game world and beautifully re-created Wild West towns. It seems to be harnessing all the allure of the Old West and distilling it into an unmissable adventure.



3

BIOSHOCK 2

Publisher 2K Games Developer 2K Marin ETA February

The world of Rapture may be fictional, but the influences of the age in which it was supposed to have been built are very real. *BioShock 2* is set in 1970, but the city's peak of the Fifties remains a strong force. *BioShock* created this setting brilliantly and this sequel will follow suit.



4

METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

Publisher Konami Developer Kojima Productions ETA May

Returning to Naked Snake's evolution into Big Boss, *Peace Walker* will be looking to capture something of his last outing's 1974, Costa Rica setting. Expect plenty of period references and an incomprehensible plot.

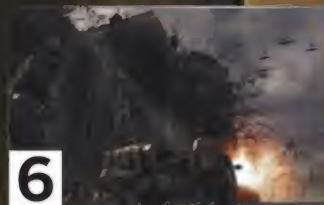


5

GOD OF WAR III

Publisher Sony Developer SCE Studios Santa Monica ETA March

The power of PS3 means that *God Of War* has never looked better than in this third outing and the creation of Ancient Greece, albeit with a lot of licence and fantasy thrown in, looks better than ever. *GOW III* is wrapping things up, though, and bringing an end to the ancient world.



6

CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR 2

Publisher Activision Developer Treyarch ETA November

Another historical setting from Treyarch seems likely, but will it be the Pacific theatre again or Vietnam?



7

SINGULARITY

Publisher Activision Developer Raven Software ETA February

While this game begins in 2010, it actually jumps back and forth to 1950 for a real mixture of both old and new settings.



8

LA NOIRE

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar ETA November

What little we've seen of *LA Noire* has been enough to tell us its Forties gumshoe setting will be an amazing place to experience.



9

DANTE'S INFERNO

Publisher EA Developer Visceral Games ETA February

Inspired by a 14th Century poem, the spirit of the age will remain strong despite the game being set in Hell.



10

THIEF 4

Publisher Square Enix Developer Eidos Montreal ETA November

Thief's mix of 15th and 19th Century settings has always gone down well and more of the same is expected.

10 Games To Play With Others

This is what your friends list was made for

1 MAG

Publisher Sony Developer Zipper Interactive ETA January

THIS FEATURE IS about numbers, mainly the numbers 20 and ten, so in keeping with that theme we're going to let numbers dictate which game tops the 'playing with others' top ten. While there might be more than 256 players wandering around the same game environment as you in *Final Fantasy XIV Online*, you're never going to have any situation that actually involves 256 players simultaneously. For that to occur you need MAG, which was formerly known as *Massive Action Game* with good reason.

In order to prevent MAG from descending into a MIFFA (Massive Incomprehensible Free For All), you'll

not just be part of a 128-player team. You'll primarily be part of an eight-player squad, which is part of a four-squad platoon. Each squad, each platoon and your whole team will have an appointed leader whose job it is to make sure everyone under their command is sticking to the battle plan and not running off on their own getting killed.

If it works, it'll be one of the best, most groundbreaking online experiences ever. If it works. The technology works and Zipper seems to have done everything it can to encourage co-operative play, but ultimately it's going to hinge on the people playing it.



2 CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 2 DLC

Publisher Activision Developer Infinity Ward ETA March

You'd be mad to think that *MW2* begins and ends in 2009. It's going to be one of the most important games of 2010, too. The multiplayer will keep you going for months, especially as there are two DLC packs due next year.



3 BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

Publisher EA Developer DICE ETA March

When it comes to balanced, tightly designed team objective matches, we reckon DICE might just about still have the edge over Infinity Ward. There's arguably more of a feeling of frontline push and pull with *Battlefield*, and more scope for true co-operation with team-mates.



4 DEMON'S SOULS

Publisher TBC Developer From Software ETA June

Players work together and/or against each other in *Demon's Souls*. Most of the time it's single-player, but certain items let players team up temporarily or invade each other's games and lay down a challenge. You can also leave messages with hints for other players to find.



5 TWISTED METAL

Publisher Sony Developer Eat Sleep Play ETA October

The *Twisted Metal* series has always struggled to find an audience in Europe, but that may be partly because the PSone and PS2 weren't ideal for what is ultimately a multiplayer deathmatch game. The PS3 will give the next *Twisted Metal* title the online platform it's always deserved.



6 FINAL FANTASY XIV ONLINE

Publisher Square Enix Developer Square Enix ETA August
Second MMO chapter for Japan's biggest RPG export, after *FFXI*, which never got a European PS release.



7 GRAN TURISMO 5

Publisher Sony Developer Polyphony Digital ETA April

The first full-sized *Gran Turismo* title to feature online multiplayer, at long last. *GT5 Prologue* gave us a taste, and now we want more. Much more.



8 MODNATION RACERS

Publisher Sony Developer Sony San Diego ETA April

Based on the same 'Play, Create, Share' idea as *LBP*, *ModNation Racers* is a kart racer with a focus on customisation and community.



9 SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

Publisher Capcom Developer Capcom ETA March

Capcom is promising improvements to the online multiplayer modes of *Street Fighter IV*, with fighters being able to play in groups somehow.



10 LOST PLANET 2

Publisher Capcom Developer Capcom ETA February

In addition to a similar 16-player multiplayer setup, as seen in the first game, *Lost Planet 2* will have four-player co-op. You can try it for yourself in the PSN demo.

10 Muck Abouts

The games that encourage simply mucking about and being sandboxy

1 JUST CAUSE 2

Publisher Square Enix Developer Avalanche Studios ETA February

THIS CATEGORY WAS basically created to house *Just Cause 2*, as from what we've played it looks to be one of the best games of recent years for simply mucking about, messing about and having a piss around. The massive open world on the fictional island of Panau is ripe for hijinks, and since we discovered the grappling hook, we haven't been able to sleep at night. We crave it. We want it. We need it. Attaching one end of the hook to a gas canister, the other to an enemy and shooting the former leads to one of the funniest ways to dispatch an enemy we've ever seen. Aside from simply using the game as a playground, it helps that *Just Cause 2* is actually very well made and a lot of fun to play. While most of the time we spend with it will be most likely grapple-hooking everywhere, it's good to know that there is also a solid, fun game behind the seemingly shallow veneer. Time will tell if it holds up for dozens of hours of play, but we remain very hopeful.



2 DEAD RISING 2

Publisher Capcom Developer Blue Castle Games ETA April

It was between *Just Cause 2* and *Dead Rising 2* for champion of this category, as both offer a ridiculous amount of pissing about for your money. *Dead Rising 2* with its dynamic slicing, dressing up and heavily armed wheelchairs just missed out, but still offers plenty.



4 MODNATION RACERS

Publisher Sony Developer Sony San Diego ETA April

While technically this isn't an open world or ripe for truly mucking about, the creation aspects of *ModNation Racers* put the game high up on this particular list. The potential for an unlimited number of tracks and to mess about with some crazy creations makes us very hopeful.



3 RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Publisher Rockstar Games Developer Rockstar San Diego ETA April

The open Wild West world presented to players in *Red Dead Redemption* already looks spectacular. Rockstar is famed for creating atmospheric, deep and detailed worlds and we're sure it will be an absolute joy to lose ourselves in the dust bowl of the American frontier.



5 RAGE

Publisher EA Developer id Software ETA September

Race around, take on missions, just mill about doing nothing – the possibilities for mucking about, or sandboxing, or whatever you want to call it, are numerous in id's first full release in a long time. Backed up by interesting technology and the developer's pedigree, *Rage* should be ruddy good.



6 BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

Publisher EA Developer DICE ETA March

More online multiplayer madness with *Bad Company 2*, this time with the ability to stand around destroying even more buildings.



7 CRYSIS 2

Publisher EA Developer Crytek ETA November

In the original game you could throw a turtle at a helicopter to destroy it. That's all you really need to know about the mucking-about possibilities of *Crysis 2*.



8 THIEF 4

Publisher Eidos/Square Enix Developer Eidos Montreal ETA November

Less mucking about and more 'planning however you want to plan', we still have absolutely no doubts about *Thief 4*'s place on this list.



9 DC UNIVERSE ONLINE

Publisher Sony Online Entertainment Developer Sony Online Austin ETA December

Not just mucking about, but *super* mucking about with the MMOG where you still can't be Superman or Batman.



10 LA NOIRE

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar ETA November

Alright, so this is clutching at straws as we know absolutely nothing about the game, but as we've already said: Rockstar has the sandbox pedigree.

10 Massive Monsters

Give these big guys plenty of room

1 LOST PLANET 2

Publisher Capcom Developer Capcom ETA February

LOST PLANET 2 SEES co-op play introduced to the series, and accordingly enemies have become more numerous, and bosses much larger. One particularly massive, six-legged beastie can be taken down from the inside. Send the bravest member of your squad into its mouth and he or she can start attacking it from the inside, which makes the weak spots on the outside bigger and easier for the rest of the squad to attack. It's disgusting, but effective.

If no one wants to wade through Akrid belly bile, there are other ways. You could climb to a high vantage point then jump onto its back so you can concentrate point blank fire into its biggest weak spot. Yes, it's just like that bit in *Starship Troopers*. Or if a stand-up fight is more your thing, your entire squad can hop aboard a Vital Suit armoured mech and use sheer firepower to bring it down. The most important thing is that these are huge monsters that must be defeated using tactics, not by a simple combination of attack pattern recognition and QTEs.

2010 According To... Dino Crisis 2

THANKS TO SCIENTIFIC research gone wrong, an entire US town disappears to be replaced by a jungle filled with man-eating dinosaurs. A lot of time travelling will take place, as it's realised that dinosaurs and humans can't coexist, and rockets piss off a T-Rex.



2 GOD OF WAR III

Publisher Sony Developer Sony Santa Monica ETA March

The monsters in *God Of War III* are your friends – at least in as much as the angriest man in the world can actually have friends. The Titans are so big, the early levels of the game take place on the surface of the body of one of them.



3 RESISTANCE 3

Publisher Sony Developer Insomniac Games ETA November

One of the best bits in *Resistance 2* was the epic battle against the Leviathan boss, a Chimera roughly the same size as a skyscraper. How will Insomniac top that in the next *Resistance* game? A monster the size of Wales?



4 THE LAST GUARDIAN

Publisher Sony Developer Team Ico ETA October

The creature featured in *The Last Guardian* trailer, which we assume is the last guardian, might not be all that big, but considering it's half-mouse, it's huge. We reckon it's only a baby too, so it might get much, much bigger.



5 CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW

Publisher Konami Developer Mercury Steam/Kojima Productions ETA October

Would you rather slay a vampire or a massive monster? A tough choice, but you won't have to make it in *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow* as it has both massive monsters and vampires.



6 BAYONETTA

Publisher Sega Developer Platinum Games ETA January

As you'll see in our review (p68) there are loads of monsters in *Bayonetta* – many made from Bayonetta's hair.



7 DANTE'S INFERNO

Publisher EA Developer Visceral Games ETA February

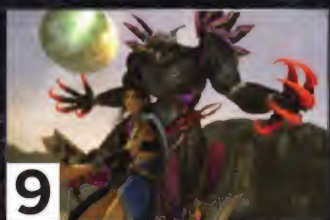
Dante's Inferno has a whole bunch of enormous bosses, each representing the epitome of some terrible sin.



8 DEAD SPACE 2

Publisher EA Developer Visceral Games ETA October

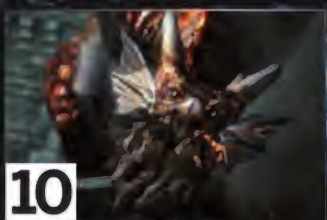
We saw big space mutants in the first game, and now we're demanding even bigger ones.



9 FINAL FANTASY XIII

Publisher Square Enix Developer Square Enix ETA March

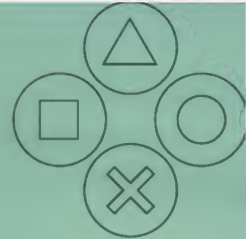
Most of the characters are l'Cie, and turn into nasty monsters if they die before completing their Focus. Yikes!



10 DEMON'S SOULS

Publisher TBC Developer From Software ETA June

The more souls a demon eats the bigger it gets, and some of those you'll face here are real gluttons.



10 Dark Horses

The ten games that may surprise everyone by selling well

1 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 2

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Montpellier ETA October

WE HAVE THE distinct feeling that should *Beyond Good and Evil 2* actually be released in 2010 it will do very well. The passion of the fanbase behind the first game runs deep, and word of mouth made the original a cult classic.

Take this already-standing popularity and apply it to a much-wanted sequel that many still think will never happen, and you have the recipe for a genuine success coming out of leftfield. True dark horse pie. While all we've seen of the game so far is a short trailer and leaked test footage, they do

at least show us that the game — should it ever be officially announced by Ubisoft — continues the adventures of the lovely Jade and her uncle Pey.

Series creator Michel Ancel has confirmed the story will be a direct continuation from the first, which means this particular dark horse has the added benefit of tying up one or two loose ends we still have from the first game. We won't ruin it here, as that would be unfair, and it just means we once again get to encourage you to pick up a copy of the original and finish that badboy.



2 BRINK

Publisher Bethesda Softworks Developer Splash Damage ETA September

Brink has surprised many who have seen and played it. It looks striking, bold and is instantly recognisable, and plays better than many had hoped or expected. Splash Damage is good at plying its trade, which is squad and objective-based shooters. *Brink* has every chance of being its finest moment.



3 SPLIT/SECOND

Publisher Disney Interactive Studios Developer Black Rock Studio ETA March

Pure was a very good racing game, a lot of fun and sadly ignored by the gamesplaying public. With *Split/Second* Black Rock is looking to take the fun of *Pure* and inject some Michael Bayisms. We reckon this will be good, and hopefully this time the public will feel the same.



4 I AM ALIVE

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Shanghai ETA September

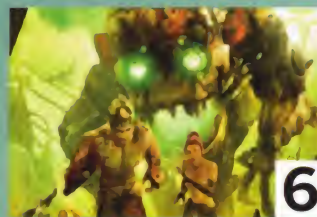
People do love their natural disasters, and with global warming on the agenda of many, the concept of *I Am Alive* may register on more radars than you'd think. It's an interesting, original concept on its own, and when Ubisoft's marketing knack is taken into account, this has real potential.



5 JUST CAUSE 2

Publisher Square Enix Developer Avalanche Studios ETA February

There's no denying how much fun you can have with the game, but that doesn't necessarily translate to massive sales figures. Luckily, we have a feeling that *Just Cause 2*'s combination of action and nonsensicality will tempt many in a post *Modern Warfare 2* lull.



6 ENSLAVED

Publisher Namco Bandai Developer Ninja Theory ETA September

Heavenly Sword did well, but if Ninja Theory manages to make *Enslaved* a good game on top of looking good, winner.



7 DEMON'S SOULS

Publisher Atlus Developer From Software ETA June

A strong fanbase popped up for *Demon's Souls* since its overseas releases. It is outside bet territory, but it could do well.



8 HOMEFRONT

Publisher THQ Developer Kaos Studios ETA September

Written by the scribe behind *Red Dawn*, *Homefront* could provide all of our nationalistic/Wolverines fantasies in game form.



9 3D DOT GAME HEROES

Publisher TBC Developer From Software ETA August

Quirky games don't normally do well, but the art style of *3D Dot Game Heroes* could sway a sceptical public.



10 MAG

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Zipper Interactive ETA January

It's been hyped to the nines, but there's a chance *MAG* could actually, genuinely redefine online shooters as we know them.

10 Download Gems

Get these from the Store

1 CASTLE CRASHERS

Publisher The Behemoth Developer The Behemoth ETA February

CASTLE CRASHERS HAS established itself as one of the best-selling games ever on the Xbox Live Arcade and, due to popular demand, is headed to the PlayStation Store next year.

Gameplay-wise it's a mix of arcade classics *Golden Axe* and *Gauntlet*, with some RPG-esque levelling up and The Behemoth's distinct visual style and humour thrown in. If you ever played *Alien Hominid* on the PS2 you'll have an idea of what to expect, although *Castle Crashers* feels more like a proper game. While *Alien Hominid* was really just a funny flash game that became successful enough to be ported to the PS2, *Castle Crashers* is purpose built for consoles, so much more ambitious. The bold 2D art style is still much the same as in *Alien Hominid*, but the game design is way more sophisticated. It has the 'retro game with everything turned up to 10' kind of feel that always works so well on the PlayStation Store, and we expect it to be just as big a hit on PS3 as it has been on the 360.



2 CALL OF DUTY: CLASSIC

Publisher Activision Developer Infinity Ward ETA January

If you're enough of a *Call Of Duty* obsessive to have bought either the Hardened or Prestige edition of *Modern Warfare 2* then you'll already have *Call Of Duty: Classic*, the downloadable console port of the original *Call Of Duty* game – otherwise you're going to have to wait a few more months.



3 FRET NICE

Publisher Tecmo Developer Pieces Interactive ETA February

We first heard about this platformer designed to be played using a *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band* controller when Harmonix's Dan Teasdale mentioned it to us in an interview last year. "It's really fun to play. I'd definitely recommend it. We totally support that," he said, which sounds like a ringing endorsement to us.



4 METALCALYPSE: DETHGAME

Publisher Konami Developer Frozen Codebase ETA September

Third-person beat-'em-up based on the *Metalocalypse* cartoon series that, from what we've seen, has you playing as a Klokateer, one of Dethklok's hooded roadies, killing people really violently. Dethklok has featured in *Guitar Hero II*, in case you were wondering.



5 VANDAL HEARTS: FLAMES OF JUDGEMENT

Publisher Konami Developer Konami ETA June

Vandal Hearts on the PSone was possibly the best turn-based strategy RPG ever made, but then *Vandal Hearts II* was nowhere near as good, so we can't decide whether to be excited about this new prequel or not. Hmm... oh, go on then, we're excited. Mmm... turns.



6 PEGGLE

Publisher PopCap Games Developer PopCap Games ETA January

So easy to play, so difficult to stop playing, *Peggle* has already been a major hit on numerous other platforms, and the PlayStation Store is next.



7 SOLDNER-X 2: FINAL PROTOTYPE

Publisher eastasiasoft Developer SideQuest Studios ETA January

The rise of downloadable gaming has seen a revival for hardcore scrolling shooters, hence this *Soldner-X* sequel.



8 BONK: BRINK OF EXTINCTION

Publisher Hudson Developer Hudson ETA April

Bonk's Adventure was a cult classic released in 1990, and this is a brand new adventure for the heroic caveman.



9 MATT HAZARD: BLOOD BATH AND BEYOND

Publisher D3 Publisher Developer Vicious Cycle ETA February

Eat Lead: The Return Of Matt Hazard was a great idea but a crap game. Maybe this 2D run 'n' gun shooter will better fit the IP.



10 EXPLODEMON!

Publisher Curve Studios Developer Curve Studios ETA January

Another new game designed to evoke the spirit of old games, *Explodemon* has a very *Megaman* look to it and the main character explodes at will.

10 To Be Announced

Ten games we can't wait for, which haven't actually been announced

1 CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR 2

Publisher Activision Developer Treyarch ETA November

WE MAY NOT have been totally enamoured with the original *World at War*, but this doesn't stop us from anticipating the release of the inevitable sequel – for two very good reasons. One: we wanted to know if Treyarch would address the failings of the original title, and two: we want to see if the depths of bad taste can reach even deeper than the spinning coffins/American flag cut scene from *WaW*. After all, Infinity Ward has done a good job of raising the bar for controversy, and it will be fun to see what other ridiculously misjudged and potentially offensive World War Two imagery will get thrust our way. Jet-powered coffins? Holocaust denial? Or will it just be more zombies?

None of this stops us from being excited about the game though, and it never hurts to have a decent online shooter sitting around to get involved in. Plus Ubisoft has set a fine example through *Assassin's Creed 2*, showing us that a sequel really can address issues with the first game in a series. Give us exciting set pieces, less run-of-the-mill gameplay and less violence for violence's sake, then you'll have a game we'll want to play.



2 KILLZONE 3

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer Guerrilla Games
ETA December

It was recently rumoured that the sequel to February's fantastic FPS would see a possible release in 2010, thus immediately bagging itself a spot on this list. To be honest it's unlikely, but it's hard not to get excited about how amazing it will clearly look and the potential for multiplayer.



3 SAINTS ROW PSP

Publisher Volition Developer THQ
ETA September

We don't often get our game announcement tips from Swedish metal bands, but that's exactly what happened earlier this year when Opeth revealed it has given the track *The Lotus Eater* to THQ to include on a new PSP version of *Saints Row*. We couldn't get any further comment from THQ.



4 TWISTED METAL

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer Eat, Sleep, Play
ETA October

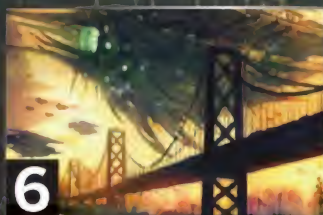
We've decoded the secret message, we've seen the mushroom cloud with Sweet Tooth's face in it, and now all we have to do is wait until E3 for an official announcement. The return of one of the best car combat series ever made has us, frankly, thrilled. So long as Axel returns.



5 SYNDICATE

Publisher EA Developer Starbreeze
ETA October

The return of this ultra-violent sci-fi masterpiece is something that has Ian very excited indeed, even if it has been 13 years since the last game. Starbreeze is the master of creating atmosphere, and the *Syndicate* series is one that thrives on atmosphere. It's a coupling that's simply meant to be.



6 RESISTANCE 3

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Insomniac Games
ETA November

More alien shooting, more good multiplayer, more hope they'll invent some more fun weaponry. More hope it will be epic.



7 TIMESPLITTERS 4

Publisher EA Developer Crytek UK
ETA November

Free Radical's death and reincarnation must surely have seen the same happen for the company's flagship FPS. We live in monkey-hope.



8 GHOST RECON: PREDATOR

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft
ETA April

We've been waiting a while to hear about some new *Ghost Recon* adventures, so it's about time *Predator* was announced.



9 MASS EFFECT 2

Publisher EA Developer BioWare
ETA October

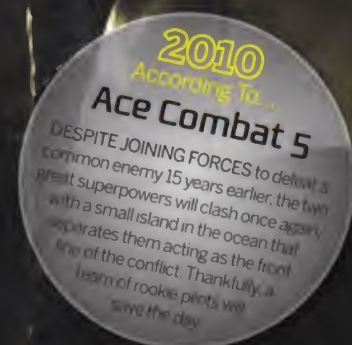
Mass Effect 1+2 double pack for PlayStation 3 by the end of the year. You heard it here first... But only speculatively, of course.



10 SPLINTER CELL: CONVICTION

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Montreal
ETA August

Another 360 'exclusive', we would not be surprised in the slightest if *Splinter Cell Conviction* were soon announced for PS3.





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PlayStation.2

PS3



Wii

XBOX 360

XBOX LIVE

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NEWS

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

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What's next for video downloads on PSN?



IT'S BEEN A bit of a rollercoaster of a year if we're being honest. While everyone has been carefully watching their bank balances and worrying about credit

crunches, the games industry has been going about its business more or less as usual. However, there have been casualties along the way, as we began 2009 with the loss of Free Radical and have ended it with Pandemic closing, too. So much for the recession-proof games industry.

But against this backdrop of global financial hardship it cannot be denied that many have done very well. Sony very much among them. The PS3 has come on leaps and bounds with new services, one of its strongest game line-ups since launch and ever-improving sales. This puts it in really good shape for the mysteries that await us in 2010 and HD gaming morphs into motion-control gaming and later even 3D gaming. It's a very exciting time to be a PS3 owner that's for sure, but not one filled with any certainty. While I let you ponder what is to come in 2010 with its games, updates and technology it only leaves me to wish you all a very happy New Year. Bring it on.

News Editor, Jonathan Gordon



"I love games and I'm inspired by the world of games that my kids are going to grow up in. The debate in Westminster is skewed against gamers. They need their voice heard. That's why I set up Gamers' Voice" – Tom Watson, MP for West Bromwich East

SLIMMER OF THE YEAR

New emphasis on games made 2009 Sony's year



The Timeline

A year on PS3 at a glance



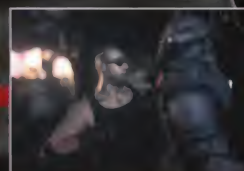
JANUARY
Skate 2



FEBRUARY
Killzone 2, Street Fighter IV, 50 Cent: Blood On The Sand
– NowGamer.com launched



MARCH
Resident Evil 5, Rock Band 2 – Eidos buys Square Enix



APRIL
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena



MAY
inFamous, UFC 2009 Undisputed



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Exciting changes coming to PS3 in 2010



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MW2 beats entertainment industry



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Play Investigates controversy and games

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Sony has pulled no punches in 2009. While some games have been held back for the new year, the line-up of exclusive titles, especially those published by Sony itself, is an intimidating read for the console's rivals. Compared to the rather miserly offerings of Microsoft this past year, Sony has managed to publish twice as many first-party games. It has also launched two new console iterations for the PS3 and PSP, launched a video download service, breathed new life into PlayStation Home and launched the hugely successful VidZone service for watching music videos.

However, 2009 was all about the games, with a year that rarely saw fewer than two or three great games hitting the shelves each month, powered on by those exclusives coming from Sony itself. Of course at the centre of all these great games was a console that finally began to accept itself as a games machine first and foremost. If this wasn't clear enough, *Killzone 2* and *inFamous* were both released before E3. By comparison Microsoft had *Halo Wars* and *Ninja Blade* to its name by the time the summer kicked in. The concentration of Sony's vision for the PlayStation 3 from 'do-it-all entertainment centre' to 'dedicated games machine - plus' was only made clearer by the games conventions. Sony's motion-control technology was shown off with games specifically in mind and then at gamescom we finally saw the long-rumoured PS3 Slim announced and dated.

Whether or not Sony dropped the ball by not announcing the PS3 Slim at E3 was a debate that raged for some time, but for us it all paid off in the end. The rumours of the PS3 Slim's existence only helped in its promotion. By the time we finally got to see the new machine at gamescom, expectation of a cheaper, lighter and more accessible PlayStation console was high and everyone who had even a mild desire to pick one up began to have their fires stoked. Holding off on the PS3 Slim actually helped to get it out in people's minds, plant the seed of a price drop and led to the huge response we witnessed in September.

Along with price drops across the range of console SKUs, the introduction of the PS3 Slim was a catalyst for success in the later half of the year. The drop in price and the more approachable nature of the new console made it an attractive proposition just in time for the release of the year's most anticipated console exclusive. The release of *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* really marked the highest point for the PlayStation 3 in 2009 and the culmination of not only this year's efforts to draw the attention back on the PS3's true calling as a games machine, but of Sony's dedication to innovation and creative freedom.

By backing developers like Guerrilla Games and Naughty Dog Sony has been building a base of talented studios and giving them the freedom to build brand-new titles with each console generation. It's because of this that Naughty Dog has grown from making *Crash Bandicoot* to one of the greatest adventure games ever to grace a console. It's this dedication to creativity and quality which has brought Sony and the PS3 to the brink of a momentous coming year, where it could finally see itself earning a share of the games market closer to equal with its rivals than many thought possible a year ago. All

The PS3 has earned back the respect of gamers through its innovation, games line-up and its promise for the future

this against the background of studios and publishers collapsing and being bought out as the industry proved less recession-proof than we were led to believe.

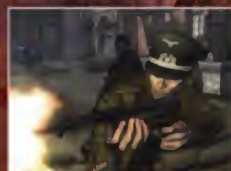
Most importantly, though, the PS3 has earned back the respect of gamers through its innovation, games line-up and its promise for the future. PlayStation has long been a household brand synonymous with gaming, but the PS3's lofty pretensions were almost ahead of their time. Now, with the games to sell itself, the accolades to promote itself and the console to ingratiate itself, the PS3 has risen above its critics and laid the foundations this year to defy economics and make great strides into dominating the next gaming year.



JUNE
Ghostbusters, *Red Faction*: Guerrilla, *Fight Night Round 4* – Motion controller revealed



JULY
Katamari Forever, *Battlefield 1943* – Midway closes studios



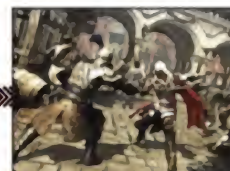
AUGUST
Batman: Arkham Asylum, *Wolfenstein* – PS3 Slim rumours rage



SEPTEMBER
The Beatles: Rock Band, *Colin McRae: DiRT 2* – PS3 Slim released



OCTOBER
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves, *Borderlands*, *Brütal Legend*, *DJ Hero*



NOVEMBER
Assassin's Creed II, *Modern Warfare 2*, *Dragon Age: Origins* – Pandemic closes



DECEMBER
The Saboteur, *Avatar: The Game*

stop press



Bully for you (again)

Shawn Lee, composer of the music from the original *Bully* – titled *Canis Canem Edit* over here – let slip in a recent interview that he would soon be working on the soundtrack for a sequel to Rockstar's 2006 school-'em-up. The rumours are that Rockstar Vancouver will be handling development, though official word has been "no comment". No word if it will be titled *Bully 2: Bully In Space*, but we live in hope.



Lost Planet's Residents

Preorder bonuses range from pretty lame through to magnificent, and this one falls more towards the latter end of the scale. Those ordering *Lost Planet 2* early will receive a code to download an Albert Wesker skin – you know, the evil bloke from *Resident Evil* – complete with massive revolver. The offer is only running through GameStop in the US at the time of writing, but will hopefully extend to the EU in due course.



Riidge Racerrrr! ... ahem

According to Siliconera, Namco has trademarked the name 'Ridge Racer Accelerated' in Japan. There's no official word to back up the news, and names do get trademarked all the time and remain unused. However, it's been a while since we had our last hit of racing on ridges so we are willing to bet this will be a new instalment in the long-running drive-'em-up series. We'll report on anything new we might hear.



Silver Screen PSThree'n

PSN Video Delivery Service launches, could offer indie filmmakers an outlet in the future

Sony launched its Video Delivery Service on 19 November, bringing Europe around 2,000 movies from many major studios as well as some European independents. The service operates through the PlayStation Store; rentals start at £2.49 and last for 14 days until you start watching them, then they run out in 48 hours. Purchases range from £6.99 to £11.99 and are yours to keep, transfer to PSP and do what you want with, really. Films are available in either SD or HD (currently rental only for HD), and are obviously priced differently to reflect the drop/rise in quality, and we have been promised that around 50 movies per week will be added to the service. To encourage newcomers to the service, SCEE offered new registrants to PSN a free copy of *Transformers* to download.

We have been promised that around 50 movies per week will be added to the service

and keep – this offer has since expired, but it was a nice idea. Those of us who have been loyal to Sony aren't being forgotten, as existing PSN subscribers have an offer of their own – buy a copy of *Angels & Demons*, get *The Da Vinci Code* for free. Where we can't fault the generosity, we can fault the films.

We attended the swanky launch party for the service and were able to bag an interview with Alison Turner, European director of content, marketing and programming for SCEE. While most answers covered the standard topics mentioned above, there was room for a few speculative answers that really grabbed our interest.

When asked about the potential to support independent filmmakers by featuring their productions on the service, Turner said: "I think moving forward there's an opportunity to support local independents... It would be great fun, wouldn't it?" As for individuals, not backed by any real money or studio – would they find an outlet for their creativity? Turner seemed to like the idea: "Moving forward I'd like to see more of that, particularly in the UK. It would be really nice." No confirmations on either though, obviously.

As for comment on the potential Sony/Lovefilm link-up that we reported on last month? Well, all that we received was a resounding "no comment".

Comparison time!

So which video service offers more? 360 or PS3? Find out in this thrilling head-to-head face-off to the death!

PSN VIDEO DELIVERY SERVICE

Price:
Rentals: £2.49
Purchases: £6.99-£11.99

File Size:
SD: around 2GB
HD: around 8GB

Video quality:
HD 1080p and SD

Sound:
Two-channel stereo

Streaming:
No

Rental restrictions:
14 days on hard drive, 48 hours from when you start to watch

Studio support:
Most major movie studios, some regional independents

Extra charges:
None

Special features:
Mid-download playback, transfer to up to three PSPs

XBOX LIVE ZUNE MARKETPLACE

Price:
Rentals: from 250 (£2.13) to 600 (£5.10) points
Purchases: N/A

File Size:
SD: around 2GB
HD: around 8GB

Video quality:
HD 1080p and SD

Sound:
Some in Dolby 5.1, most in two-channel stereo

Streaming:
Yes. Available in 1080p

Rental restrictions:
14 days on hard drive, 24 hours from when you start to watch

Studio support:
Most major movie studios

Extra charges:
Live Gold subscription £39.99 (12 month), wireless N adapter £59.99 (necessary for HD streaming, only if using wireless)

Special features:
Party support, TV shows planned to be available, transfer to Zune-enabled devices

AND THE WINNER IS...

Neither, really, because they both offer a good service. VDS edges on strength of being able to download for keepsies and being cheaper overall, but Zune has the HD streaming option. We'll have to look again in a year or so to see how VDS progresses, but right now there isn't a huge amount to differentiate between the two.



A whole range of Sony products are set for big changes in 2010.

Good To Firmware

Updates galore coming in 2010 with big changes afoot

Sony will be ringing in the changes via a number of console changing updates and expansion in 2010, recent announcements have revealed. 3D gaming, new PSN services, non-gaming content, PSN branching out to other Sony hardware and a virtual promise of cross-game chat have all been talked about by Sony in the last month as it lays out its cards for a industry-shaking year of innovations and expansions.

Top of the list is 3D gaming, which will coincide with a new line of Sony BRAVIA 3D TVs in late-2010. At the Sony Media & Investor Conference last month the electronics giant pledged to "release 3D games in line with Sony's 3D strategy," and that "all PS3 units will be firmware upgradeable to 3D." This confirms our thinking from a couple of issues back that Sony's 3D technology wouldn't need entirely new consoles to be released, unlike the current position of the PS3's competitors.

Meanwhile PSN will see many new additions, including some subscription content, according to Kaz Hirai. "We are studying the

possibility of introducing a subscription model, offering premium content and services, in addition to the current free services," he said in a statement after the Media & Investor Conference, which seemed to suggest broader subscription plans. Sony has been keen to stress that online gaming will remain free, but some other, new services could be charged for. You may also get the chance to access PSN from other hardware as Sony wants to expand its online services for its mobiles, PCs, Blu-ray players and TVs using PSN as a template.

And cross-game chat? It's something many PS3 gamers want to experience and it turns out it's something Sony's PSN team wants, too. "I wish I could just give you a date, I really do," PSN product manager James Thorpe wrote on the European PlayStation blog. "Trust me when I say that as soon as I hear from 'up top' I will be shouting about it and making myself the most popular person on the blog. I hope, like you all do, that it's sooner rather than later." Sooner please, James. Sooner.

Two Wheels Or Four?

Are motorcycles in Gran Turismo 5 a good idea?

Speaking recently with IGN, *Gran Turismo* creator Kazunori Yamauchi seemed to suggest that adding motorcycles to the latest instalment of the series, due out March 2010, would be possible, so long as fans want it. "If that's what users really want in the game, I think that's a possibility," he said. "Or we could consider making a *Tourist Trophy 2* as well." The question is, what do Play readers think...

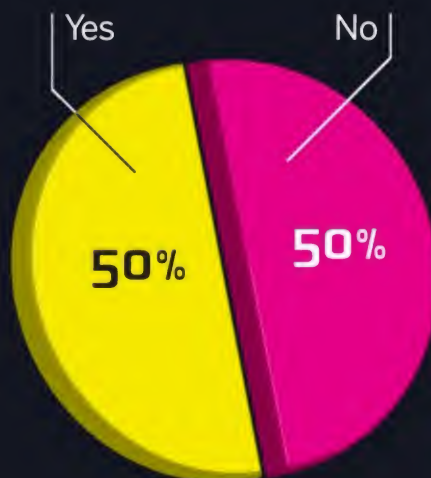
Well I can't see how it could be a bad thing. It's unlikely that the number of cars would be cut to accommodate the new bikes, given the series' anally retentive history. So that just means even more vehicles and probably a couple more licences. Seems like a no-brainer to me - **worstusernameever**

So long as they have their own section in *GT5* I'm okay with it. If they're intertwined I'm against it - **rbl007**

A sub-section would be ideal, because having bikes against cars would be unfair. It might work, but I think it'll just be a tacked-on feature. Can't say I've ever adapted to bikes in games, it might end up being a relic of a feature - **the bossman**

Well bikes didn't ruin *Burnout* so I don't see the problem with *GT5* having them. As long as they get the physics up to scratch like they do with the cars, then it should be fine - **kev schmit**

Bikes? No thanks, *Gran Turismo* is all about the cars. Screw bikes - **ProspektXY**



Visit www.play-mag.co.uk/forum to have your say. Part of the **NOW Gamer** network

Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

- 1** **Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2**
Activision
This really shouldn't come as much of a surprise. **94%**
- 2** **Assassin's Creed II**
Ubisoft
It's already selling faster than the original as everyone embraces Ezio. Well worth a look. **89%**
- 3** **FIFA 10**
EA
No change for *FIFA 10* this issue. Last issue it was beaten by PES, but that game has begun to fall. **90%**
- 4** **Pro Evolution Soccer 2010**
Konami
After a strong start, it seems that now the fans have their copies *PES* is losing out to *FIFA 10*. **72%**
- 5** **Uncharted 2: Among Thieves**
Sony
Good to see Nathan Drake's latest holding firm in the charts despite fierce competition. **96%**
- 6** **Need For Speed: Shift**
EA
The days when *Need For Speed* would dominate the end of year sales have gone. **81%**
- 7** **Dragon Age: Origins**
EA
Not an easy time for a new IP to make an impact, but BioWare's latest is doing well so far. **82%**
- 8** **Tekken 6**
Namco Bandai
Tekken was always likely to do some good business, but we wait to see if it will hold on. **94%**
- 9** **WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010**
THQ
It may have slipped, but we expect it to hold on for a bit longer. **77%**
- 10** **Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues**
LucasArts
Level creation and plenty more Lego-themed humour. **71%**

PSP CHART

- 1** **LittleBigPlanet**
Sony
Sackboy's latest shoots straight in at number one as mobile mayhem attracts the masses. **90%**
- 2** **FIFA 10**
EA
Much like the PS3 version, *FIFA 10* holds its position. It's just one of those games that will sell and sell. **NA%**
- 3** **Formula 1 2009**
Codemasters
With all the excitement of Button and Lewis teaming up we see its appeal even if we're not huge fans. **66%**
- 4** **Gran Turismo**
Sony
It's a bit embarrassing to see *GT* slip behind *F1*, but this game should stick in the charts for a while. **85%**
- 5** **Football Manager Handheld 2010**
Sega
FM is full of facts and figures and footy fans seem to love that. **60%**

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

Play By Numbers

The news in digital form

50 per cent

more preorders of *Modern Warfare 2* than *GTA IV*, according to Amazon

£67.4 million

made by *Modern Warfare 2* on day one in the UK alone

3.6 million

copies of *MW2* sold on PS3 in first five days globally

4.7 million

copies of *Modern Warfare 2* sold on day one in UK and USA combined

9.4 million

global week one sales of *Modern Warfare 2*

5.9 million

global week one sales of *Grand Theft Auto IV*

\$50,000,000

spent making *Modern Warfare 2*

\$5 million

spent by Activision to buy developer Infinity Ward in 2003



Modern Warfare 2 shoots down Harry, Niko and everything else

Activision and Infinity Ward's *Modern Warfare 2* has become the biggest launch in entertainment history, beating the bestselling film, book and music launches to make more than £186 million in its first day on sale and an estimated £331 million after five days. The closest film is *Harry Potter And the Half-Blood Prince*, which made around £237 million in its first five days. Infinity Ward's highly anticipated sequel also beat the first five-day earnings of previous record holder *GTA IV* by a cool £31 million.

"The *Call Of Duty* franchise has become a cultural phenomenon showing the power of videogames as an entertainment medium," Activision chief executive Mike Griffith said in a statement. "The shattering of these entertainment records is a testament to the compelling, cinematic and uniquely engaging experience that the '*Call Of Duty*' brand delivers." Some have also taken it as further evidence that videogames are a force to be reckoned with in the entertainment world. The debate will continue to rage about the infamous 'No Russian' level, but people are coming to accept games as a mainstream form of entertainment.

"These first-day sales figures are clear evidence that videogames are now mainstream in the UK," Michael Rawlinson, director general of ELSPA (Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers

Association), said. "Our form of interactive entertainment has come of age. Just like some movies and books, this is specifically intended for an adult audience and accordingly has emotional, adult content." Yet for the most part comments made about the most emotional and adult scene in the game dealt with it on very mature grounds, judging it against other mainstream entertainment.

"With its latest game, Infinity Ward reminds us that the first-person perspective can be a powerful storytelling tool in a smart developer's hands," wrote Winda Benedetti of MSNBC. "But while

Now we can turn to the future, which Infinity Ward is already thinking about, if only in a small way

MW2 is an example of a game that uses this most-intimate of perspectives extremely well it's also an example of a game that does it very poorly." Focusing in on 'No Russian', Kieron Gillen wrote on Rock Paper Shotgun, "The most disturbing part of No Russian is its context. A few seconds previously you're in a high-speed *James Bond* chase involving snowmobiles. A few seconds later, you're mowing down civilians. That tonal shift isn't brutal. It's laughable."

A harsh assessment perhaps, but one that echoed the feelings of many gamers. Others dismissed the game's plot altogether.

"Trying to puzzle meaning out of *Modern Warfare 2*'s plot is a foolish endeavour," Gus Mastrapa said on Wired.com. "The game cribbs its morality from post-Vietnam Hollywood: war is bad, except when it's not. Soldiers who fight for freedom are good, except when they're not. The moments when *MW2* isn't good are few and far between. That's about all you can ask from a hero."

But now we can turn to the future, which Infinity Ward is already thinking about, if only in a small way. "We don't know what our next game is," community manager Robert Bowling told MTV. "Once we've finished [*MW2*], we're going to do a lot of DLC for it, and then we're going to sit down and talk about our next project. It doesn't mean this is the end, but right now, we're continuing the story and we're concluding some storylines, but anything's possible." We may already have some clues as to what comes next, as you'll see opposite.



TALKING HEADS What the papers said



MW2 offers an intensity of action never before seen in a first-person shooter, with improved graphics, an apocalyptic edge, cinematic locations and a vast array of weapons. A sure-fire hit and an essential buy for FPS fans – **Jamie Merrill, The Independent**



Hundreds of parents have bought their children a videogame containing 'shocking' violence despite its 18 certificate – **Paul Revoir, Daily Mail**



MW2 somehow manages to live up to all the anticipation. Often brutal, superbly cinematic and never less than gripping, the competition was right to give it a wide berth – **Kevin Lynch, Mirror**



The way a trained soldier holds and fires a gun is very specific – and they've got the movement right, down to the last detail... It isn't glorifying war; it's bringing it into living rooms and simulating it as closely as possible – **Andy McNab, The Sun**



Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 is the *Citizen Kane* of repeatedly shooting people in the face. The storyline makes less sense than a gas ladder, but in terms of technical achievement, this is an undoubted masterpiece – **Charlie Brooker, Guardian**



In one scene, the player must decide whether to kill unarmed civilians at a Russian airport in order to infiltrate a terrorist group. If the player decides to join, he is rewarded with graphic scenes like the Beslan school massacre in Russia in which at least 334 hostages were killed – **Nicola McCafferty, Daily Star**



The terrorist airport atrocity fails on two counts, however. First, it telegraphs the intent with a disclaimer and an opt-out button before the chapter even begins; and, second, it is completely unnecessary, doing next to nothing to advance the story – **Stuart Andrews, The Times**

Ghost Stories

Spin-off game for Modern Warfare character in the works

Ghost, one of the support characters from *Modern Warfare 2*, already has his own comic-book series and could also be getting his own game according to the actor who voices him in the game. Craig Fairbrass, who also gave us the voice of Gaz in *Call Of Duty 4*, let the information slip during the MW2 launch event. Given that Ghost does already have a comic of his own, it's clear that Activision thinks rather fondly of the character, so a game spin-off would make some sense.

"I did – in the last game – a voice for Gaz and in this game I'm voicing Ghost, who now just got a spin-off comic of his own and they're talking about another little game to go with it," Fairbrass said. Whether or not he means a full-on expansion of the *Call Of Duty* universe

or a small flash game online is hard to say from this comment. However, we should take into account a report from the *LA Times* that stated a third development team had been added to the COD production cycle and that talk of MMOs is rich in the air around Activision.

Whatever the truth of these rumours you can guarantee after this blockbuster launch that we'll be seeing a lot more from *Call Of Duty* in the coming years with more sequels and quite possibly an expanded universe. Oh yeah, and don't forget about the movie. That'll be in the works soon, too, we'd think, after



Could Ghost be getting his own game?

hints from community manager Robert Bowling and other recent comments. "It would work very well as a film," MW2 writer Jesse Stern told GamePro. "Jason West [Infinity Ward CCO], Steve Fukuda [designer] and the rest of the guys from Infinity Ward have an interest in doing it and Activision wants to do it. I'd be very curious to give that a try."

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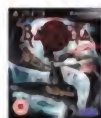
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For a full rundown of the release dates of every PlayStation game visit www.nowgamer.com/release-dates

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Bayonetta Sega **PS3** £49.99

Best Price: £32.77 from CoolShop.co.uk **Score:** 93%

Probably the best game of its type ever made. Runny, jumpy, hitty, shooty stuff from start to finish.



Darksiders THQ **PS3** £49.99

Best Price: £34.73 from TheHut.com **Score:** N/A

Epic comic-book-esque action adventure about the war between Heaven and Hell.

FRIDAY 15 JANUARY



Army Of Two: The 40th Day EA **PS3/PSP** £49.99/£29.99

Best Price: £37.73 (PS3) from TheHut.com **Score:** N/A

The team behind *Army Of Two* has admitted they made mistakes with the first one, and promised a superior sequel.



Dark Void Capcom **PS3** £44.99

Best Price: £28.73 from TheHut.com **Score:** N/A

The twist with this third-person shooter is that many of the environments are vertical. We're not sure it makes that much difference to gameplay.



SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo 3 Sony **PSP** £24.99

Best Price: £17.73 from TheHut.com **Score:** N/A

Fireteam Bravo is a very technical military term that means 'unit specialising in pocket-sized recon operations'.

PLAY. MOST WANTED

The games that get the **Play** team out of bed in the mornings



Final Fantasy XIII Square Enix **PS3** March 2010

We keep watching the release date announcement trailer for this because it's one of the funniest, most overblown things we've ever seen. No one knows who the guy presenting it is, but he seems so confident anyway.



Battlefield: Bad Company 2 EA **PS3** March 2010

We've been playing the multiplayer beta of this and we love it. It's actually good enough to drag us away from *Modern Warfare 2* for an hour or two now and again. Just now and again, though.



MAG Sony **PS3** January 2010

The *Battlefield* series used to be the undisputed king of large-scale online war gaming, but *Bad Company 2* matches are going to look like minor scuffles next to the 256-player might of the massive *MAG*.



God Of War Collection Sony **PS3** May 2010

We've imported the American version of the *God Of War Collection*, and we've been playing it, and it's really good, and there's a review of it in **Play** next month, and... and... and... we're just too excited about it.



Super Street Fighter IV Capcom **PS3** March 2010

It's *Street Fighter IV* only even more superer, with new characters and new game modes and new movies and tweaks to the gameplay to make it even more flippin' perfect, thank you very much.

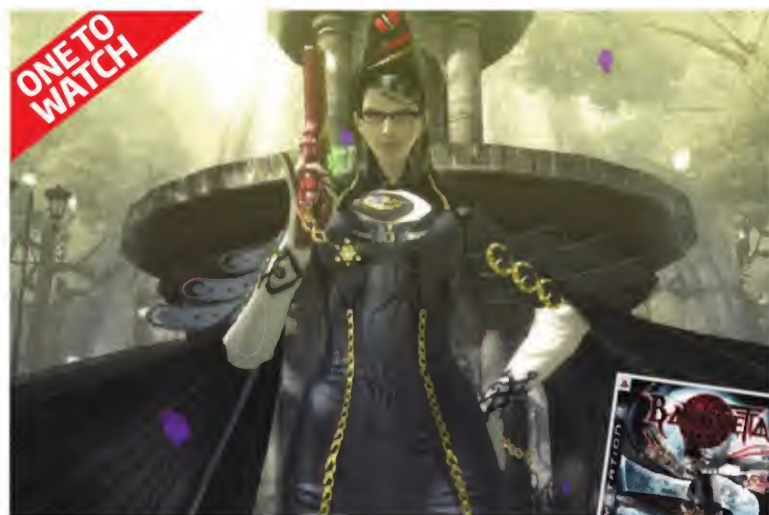


Heavy Rain Sony **PS3** February 2010

We've played the first few hours of *Heavy Rain* now and the bit that's got everyone talking is the bit where you take a shower and there's a man's bum in it and everything. You can shave his face, but not his bum.

IN FOCUS

Things to see and do before the next issue of **Play** arrives



Bayonetta

Developer Platinum Games Publisher Sega Release Date 8 January

HAVEN'T YOU HEARD? *Bayonetta* is just about the hottest game of the new year at the moment after its Japanese release set the country alight and critics began celebrating the arrival of a truly great, Japanese-developed action game. Of course the team at Platinum have a great pedigree, having *Devil May Cry*, *Resident Evil* and *Viewtiful Joe* creator Hideki Kamiya in its ranks. The demo is out of course so you should be getting some hint of all this yourselves and you don't have much longer to wait until it hits shelves. You can read our import review on page 70 for a more complete look at what makes *Bayonetta* tick.



Sherlock Holmes

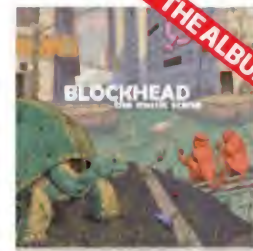
Distributor Warner Bros. Director Guy Ritchie Release Date 25 December

Robert Downey Jr takes on the role of the world's most famous and most played detective (70 actors and 200 different films according to Guinness World Records) in this Guy Ritchie adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes. It's probably the biggest release of 2009 and could still be making waves into 2010.

The Music Scene

Artist Blockhead Label Ninja Tune Release Date 18 January

Tony Simon aka Blockhead has been making his name as a hip-hop producer for the likes of Aesop Rock, but returns here with his third solo, instrumental album. By mixing and building samples *The Music Scene* is a mix of Blockhead's hip-hop roots with some ambient D&B grooves.



Hogmanay

Why New Year 2010 Where Scotland When 31 December 2009 – 2 January 2010

No one celebrates the start of a new year like the Scots, which may be why they came up with a whole new word for it. Hogmanay celebrations across the country are legendary, with Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen leading the festivities. Be sure to learn the words to 'Auld Lang Syne'.

District 9

Studio Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Director Neill Blomkamp Release Date 28 December

From the ashes of an aborted *Halo* (*spit*) movie came this rather surprising and inventive sci-fi actioner from a director who originally gave us dancing car ads and a producer who made a movie about walking a lot. The Blomkamp/Peter Jackson alliance worked out rather nicely, though, in making this film.



OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month



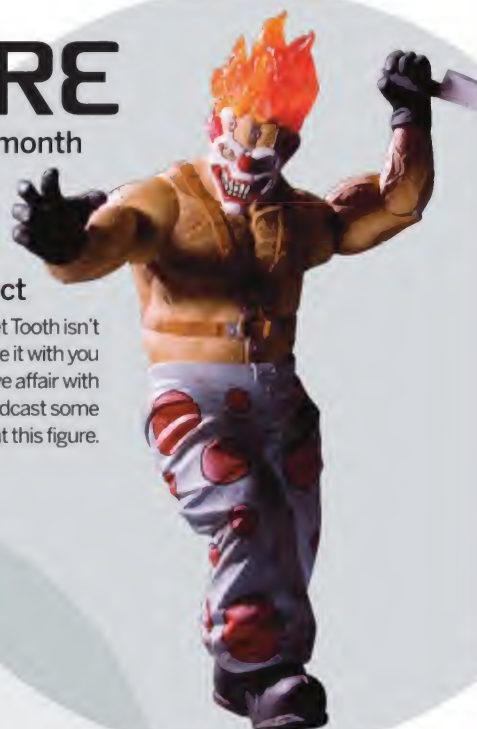
**Metal Gear Solid:
Zombie Snake Vinyl**
£59.99 at Play.com

SNAKE figures are cool. Fact. But what do you get when you mix Naked Snake, urban vinyls and the undead? Probably the most awesome *Metal Gear* collectable ever is what. Perhaps a little pricey for casual fans, if you're something of a Snake or vinyl collector then this will be a worthy addition to your collection.

Sweet Tooth Action Figure

Price TBA at DCcomics.com/dcdirect

This action figure of *Twisted Metal*'s fiery clown Sweet Tooth isn't actually available until July 2010, but we just had to share it with you as soon as possible, because it is just too cool. **Play's** love affair with *Twisted Metal* is well documented (just listen to a podcast some time) and we really want this figure.



**BioShock 2: EVE
Hypo Prop Replica**
£13.99 at Play.com

This Play.com exclusive replica is something of a coup for the site. EVE is of course the substance that gives you different plasmid powers in *BioShock* and *BioShock 2*. This replica even glows blue thanks to LEDs inside. Surely a must-have for all would-be residents of Rapture ahead of *BioShock 2*'s release next year.



Mimobot Series 4 Sith Lords

From \$24.95 at Mimoco.com

We at **Play** believe that memory storage and style can actually go hand in hand. You may think we're crazy to believe this, but you simply haven't thought about it enough. As evidence for the defence allow us to present these excellent Sith USB memory sticks with a limited edition, randomly packaged classic Darth Vader.



**SNAKE
FOR
PRESIDENT**
**SNAKE For
President T-Shirt**
\$17.95 at SplitReason.com

Can you think of a videogame character better suited to becoming US President than Solid Snake? Can you think of anyone, real or fictional, who could beat Obama at the next election? Chances are the answer you gave to both those questions was 'no', so you need this shirt.



Beard Head

\$24.99 at Beardhead.com

Available in Viking, lumberjack, grandpa, pirate and bunny, the Beard Head is a uniquely brilliant piece of balaclava design. By harnessing the awesome power of the beard, Beard Heads keep your chin and upper lip warm while also making you look extremely dapper. You can also get alternative moustache designs.



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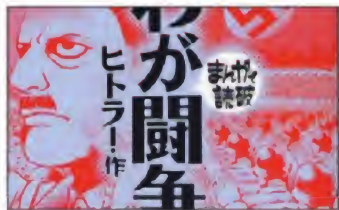


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eye on japan

strange goings-on in the land of the rising sun



Nazi comic success

A manga version of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is reportedly selling well in Japan. With sales last reported to have reached around 45,000 nationwide it's hardly flying off the shelves by manga standards, but it's apparently causing quite a stir. It's not the only controversial text to be made into manga either, as Marx's *Das Capital* has also had a graphic novelisation made as part of the same series.



Samurai love

Japanese women want samurai men, according to recent studies. With the economic troubles of the nation and the rise of 'herbivore' men, it is claimed that women in Japan are looking back on historic depictions of strong males as archetypes for the kind of strength they want in their lives. This in turn has led to a rise in women involved in samurai historical recreation events across the country as they seek out warrior lovers.



No cheering

Mongolian sumo star Asashoryu got into trouble recently after throwing his arms up in victory after an important bout, and has since had to offer a formal apology to the head of the Sumo Association for his actions. Celebration is expressly forbidden in the strict world of sumo wrestling. Asashoryu claimed that he simply got a little over-excited, but some have suggested that this enthusiasm is exactly what the ailing sport needs.



ROLLING WITH IT

Katamari creator joins condemners of Japanese industry and lovers of FPS genre

Speaking at the Gamecity event in Nottingham, *Katamari* creator Keita Takahashi opened up on the state of the Japanese games industry,

In an interview with Develop, Takahashi tackled the state of development in Japan and agreed with the sentiment of countryman and *Mega Man* creator Keiji

Inafune expressed at the Tokyo Game Show earlier this year. "I understand to a degree that the industry is pretty

much going downhill in Japan," he said. "Content is more driven by [demand] than ideas. So we don't see many people coming out with new ideas, which is why the market is saturated at the moment."

However, Takahashi also expressed an interest in partnering with a Western developer to make an unusual first-person shooter. "I haven't really had much chance to play Western games, but there are aspects to them I'm really interested in. I had this idea for an FPS where the player's character grows in size, gets bigger as the game progresses. But as you get bigger, some weapons are too small to use so you have to improvise; maybe throw airplanes at the enemies. That sort of stuff. So I have this idea of making a fun, unique FPS. With the right team it would be a good FPS."

I have this idea of making a fun, unique FPS. With the right team it would be a good FPS

and also how he'd approach an FPS title in partnership with a Western studio. He also announced a deal with Nottingham City Council to build his much talked about playground project in the UK.

IMPORT PREVIEWS 予告編 Japanese games that probably won't make it to our shores



BEATMANIA IIDX 16: EMPRESS + PREMIUM BEST (PS2)

This is a music game so packed full of songs, it's been released on two DVDs to manage all the content. This 16th instalment in the *Beatmania* series is a collection of tracks from *Empress* and some great hits of the past, totalling around 180 tracks. The gameplay is essentially the same as ever with *Beatmania*, but there's a new All-Scratch mode.



ELMINAGE II: SOUSEI NO MEGAMI TO UNMEI NO DAICHI (PSP)

If there's one thing the PSP doesn't have a shortage of, it's Japanese, dungeon crawling RPGs, but that's what *Elminage II* is offering. One little bonus is that you can load your own image into the game to use as a character in-game. There are also 12 classes of character to play as and 16 in-game jobs, in case you were worried about it not having enough to do.



MACROSS ULTIMATE FRONTIER (PSP)

Macross has been kicking around for years, and this new game really seems to offer plenty of fan service such as clips from the anime show and lots of cameos from popular characters as well as some brand new personalities. There's also a new gameplay feature called Missile Alert that warns you of inbound projectiles and gives you the chance to shoot them down. We imagine that's handy.

新着情報 GENKI GADGETS!



RC DRIVING TISSUE BOX CASE

If you've ever found yourself sneezing up a storm or in desperate need of something absorbent to mop up a mess, but were well out of reach of your tissues, then this new gadget could be the trick for you. This remote control case can be used to hold a pack of tissues and then easily guided around your home. Now the box will simply come to you and you won't have to worry about getting up for those much needed tissues. Available from GeekStuff4U.com

BOX ART OF THE MONTH



MINNA NO SUKKIRI

Japanese box art can really run the gamut from the thoroughly complicated to the ridiculously simple, and though this art for PSP title *Minna no Sukkiri* may sit very firmly in the latter camp, we can't help but be charmed by it. The killer feature of the art is the young boy's face in the lower left corner. He's amazed, presumably by the wide variety and inventiveness of this mini games collection from the makers of *Everybody's Golf*. And he should be amazed – because by all accounts it's brilliant.

日本大好き! WHY WE LOVE JAPAN

No. 27 J-Rock

Nihon Daisuki!

Japanese popular music on the whole is quite impenetrable, but its rock, metal and alternative music is fantastic. The main reason for this is that it has a tendency to be so pure of spirit, getting back to the roots of what rock and metal are supposed to be about. One particular favourite of the Play team is Electric Eel Shock, who have pretty much been touring the world non-stop for the last decade recording EPs and albums as and when they can. They epitomise everything that's great about Japanese rock, being both innocent and irreverent at the same time. Their love of Western rock and metal is obvious, but the Japanese sensibility and surrealism seeps through and makes it something much more than it was before. Ultimately they are unique, as are most J-Rock groups – and that's very rare indeed.



エチケット CULTURE SHOCK!



Play's guide to talking the talk, and walking the walk, in Japan

Translation

So the much loved creator of *Katamari* and *Noby Noby Boy* is going to build a playground in Nottingham, and there's every chance you'll really want to find it once it's been built. But what if it brings lots of Japanese tourists and you can't find anyone to point you in the right direction? Here's what to say.

Phrase: Excuse me. Could you point me in the direction of Keita Takahashi's playground, as I would like to go on the swings.

Translation: Sumimasen. Kyu-ni buranko de asobitaku nattan desuga, Takahashi Keita no kouen eno ikikata wo oshiete kuremasenka.

HAIKU REVIEW Classic Games Get Haiku'd!

遊び 俳句

LittleBigPlanet

Floaty platformer
Creativity makes it
We are the artists



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DMX Riding

THEY SAY: Rapper DMX has attacked the way in which artists are paid and credited by the games industry after being offered two cents on every copy of *Def Jam Vendetta* sold in 2003.

WE SAY: The games and music industry continue to struggle working together and often the artists do get the hard end of the deal.



Highland Games

THEY SAY: A Scottish hotel has banned the playing of videogames on the premises. The Crieff Hydro is one of the oldest hotels in Scotland and wants to restore family values.

WE SAY: It's nice to take a gaming break sometimes, but if they think no games means families will bond better, they haven't met ours.



Some More Heroes

THEY SAY: Activision has said it will be releasing less 'Hero' branded games in 2010. This year's titles included *Guitar Hero 5*, *Metallica*, *Greatest Hits*, *Band Hero* and *DJ Hero* to name a few.

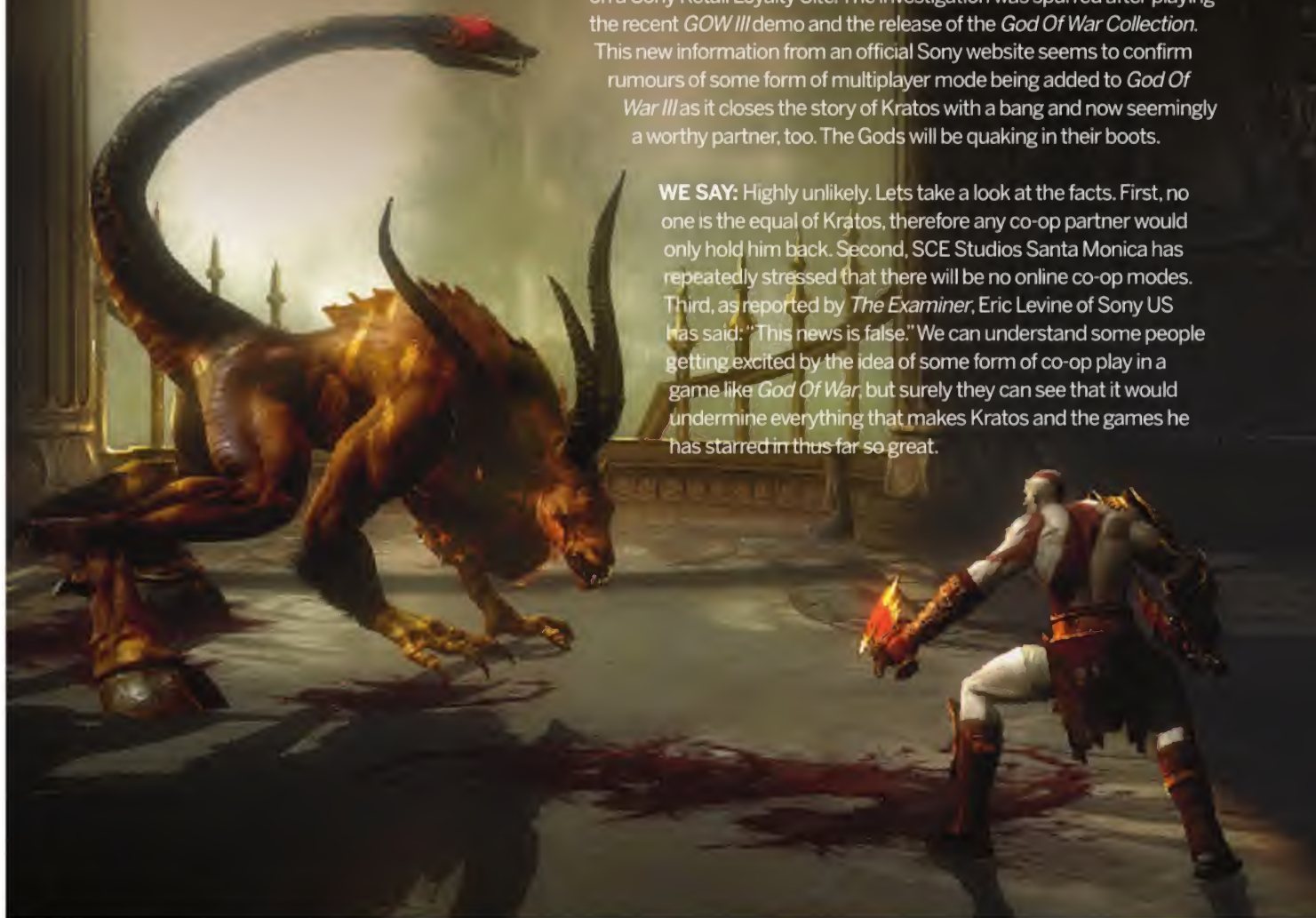
WE SAY: We'll believe it when we see it, but music game sales are dropping after the highs of recent years.

KRATOS & FRIENDS

Co-op God Of War III talk is rife

THEY SAY: *God Of War III* will feature an online co-op mode according to TheGamerAccess.com, who discovered confirmation of online play on a Sony Retail Loyalty Site. The investigation was spurred after playing the recent *GOW III* demo and the release of the *God Of War Collection*. This new information from an official Sony website seems to confirm rumours of some form of multiplayer mode being added to *God Of War III* as it closes the story of Kratos with a bang and now seemingly a worthy partner, too. The Gods will be quaking in their boots.

WE SAY: Highly unlikely. Lets take a look at the facts. First, no one is the equal of Kratos, therefore any co-op partner would only hold him back. Second, SCE Studios Santa Monica has repeatedly stressed that there will be no online co-op modes. Third, as reported by *The Examiner*, Eric Levine of Sony US has said: "This news is false." We can understand some people getting excited by the idea of some form of co-op play in a game like *God Of War*, but surely they can see that it would undermine everything that makes Kratos and the games he has starred in thus far so great.



FROM RUSSIA WITH HATE

Modern Warfare 2 banned or perhaps not

THEY SAY: Due to the now-infamous airport massacre scene in *Modern Warfare 2*, the console version of Infinity Ward's game has been recalled from stores in Russia and the PC version is getting an immediate patch to remove the offending level. This turn of events, reported by Hellforge, came to light when a Russian site criticised the content of the game for its portrayal of Russians as terrorists. Edited versions of the console game were expected to arrive in Russia around the beginning of December.

WE SAY: Well, Hellforge has since retracted the story as the Russian site (gotPS3.ru) didn't offer any evidence of its claims. We would add that it was probably very badly translated as our reading of the original Russian article comes across largely as opinion and nothing more. Activision later revealed to Eurogamer that it voluntarily cut the mission 'No Russian', as the country has no formal ratings system to work with.



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Bad Taste

Can videogames go too far? That was the question on the lips of many observers as the biggest entertainment launch in history shook the world last month. Play asks the people that matter

Talk about *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* has been split virtually down the middle between its extraordinary success as a launch – beating the very best Hollywood, music or literature has to offer in terms of sales – and concern over the level ‘No Russian’ and its violent possibilities. The killing of innocent civilians in an airport has led some people to call *Modern Warfare 2* a terrorist simulator at worst and simply poor taste at best, but this isn’t the first time such debates have raged and it’s unlikely to be the last. Therefore, the questions that seem most important to ask right now are can games go too far, how are they overstepping the mark and is this going to affect how games are treated in the future?

One of the first to jump on *Modern Warfare* in the UK was, not surprisingly, Labour MP for Leicester East Keith Vaz, a regular critic of violent and sexual content in games. Speaking to the *Daily Mail* three days before the new *Call Of Duty* was even released, he said: “I am absolutely shocked by the level of violence in this game and am particularly concerned about how realistic the game itself looks.” Vaz went so far as to bring the issue up in Parliament, where the games industry

found an unexpected voice of support from Vaz’s fellow Labour MP, Tom Watson of West Bromwich East. He has set up a Facebook group called Gamers’ Voice, which he hopes will get gamers heard by the government.

“I love videogames and I’m inspired by the world of games that my kids are going to grow up in,” Watson explained to us. “The debate in Westminster is skewed against gamers. They need their

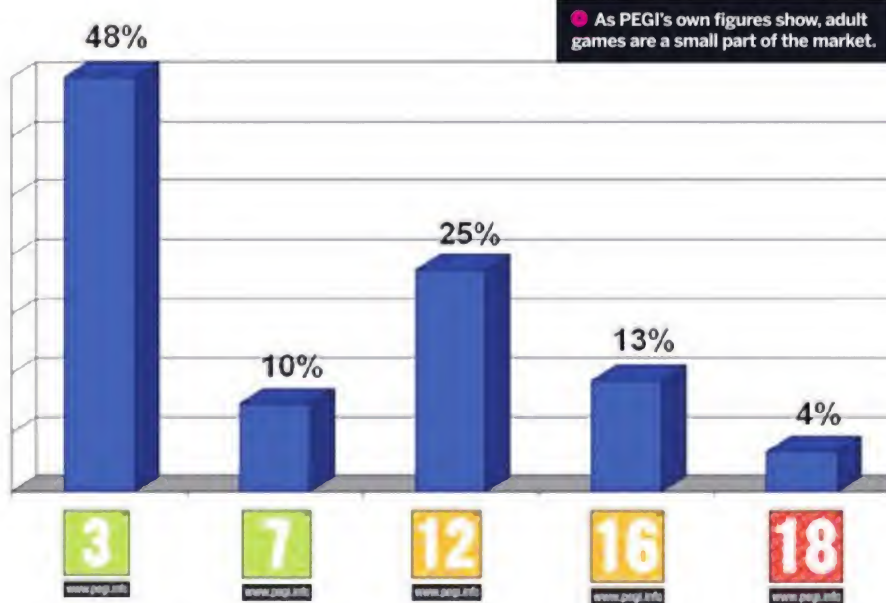
voice heard. That’s why I set up Gamers’ Voice.” As assessments go we can’t find any reason to disagree, but we did wonder why this had happened. Is it just the typical fear that surrounds every new form of media in its infancy? “There’s a toxic mix of tabloid sensationalism and MPs who are too busy to plug in a console and enjoy themselves,” is Watson’s take. But in this instance there’s more to the debate than sensationalism

alone. It cannot be denied that ‘No Russian’ hit an uncomfortable nerve.

With the changeover in ratings body due in the first few months of the new year, the debate over the content of videogames is only likely to continue, if not intensify. Unlike the BBFC, PEGI does not ban games, but merely rates them according to stringent criteria (sometimes even harsher than the BBFC) and leaves the enforcement to local government.

“In the PEGI questionnaire it is explicitly stated that it is the responsibility of each game publisher to comply with national criminal laws and use of the PEGI system does not absolve the game publisher from such responsibility or provide any legal or other defence to infringement of national criminal laws,” a PEGI spokesperson informed us.

So the law gives developers some limits to what can and cannot be depicted in a videogame, but the rules are no different to those applied to film or TV and sometimes even they overstep the mark in some people’s minds, but are they as blatant as games can be? Does the interactive nature of games make them a special case? Watson believes we, as individuals, should be allowed



TooCloseForComfort

Games that have pushed at the boundaries of taste



RESIDENT EVIL 5

The level of scrutiny placed on Capcom's zombie-busting sequel was unprecedented, even for a series that has not shied away from gore and violence. Racial prejudice came under the spotlight like never before and *Resi 5* only just managed to scrape through. There was no question at classification level, though.



MANHUNT 2

Concerns around this game and its predecessor should require no introduction. As with *Modern Warfare 2* context is the real issue with this series, with its dark and gritty atmosphere easily mistaken for an attempt to be realistic. Even in film, such slasher horror has its difficulties and controversies.



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

Where Treyarch may have misstepped with its last *Call Of Duty* title was in glorifying what should have been horrifying. The brutality of your actions in *World At War* are celebrated rather than mourned or condemned and the sense of vulnerability that made the *Call Of Duty* series great was lost.



TWISTED METAL: BLACK

In this instance poor taste was really just a question of timing as the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC in 2001 made the ability to shoot down a 747 in the game seem incredibly insensitive. These scenes only got cut in the PAL release, though, as the US version came out before the attacks.



MORTAL KOMBAT

In some ways, with its brutal Fatality moves and digitised sprites based on real-life actors, *Mortal Kombat* was looking for controversy. However, as the game that almost single-handedly forced the creation of a videogame rating system in the United States, *Mortal Kombat* stands tall among the gaming fraternity.



● *Modern Warfare 2* is the latest in a long line of games to stir up controversy in the mainstream media.

the staunchest supporters of gaming cringing and asking difficult questions. Did Infinity Ward go too far? Should games deal in adult content? Does their interactivity really

make them more affecting? Watson doesn't think so. "I've never wept or screwed up my eyes in fear at a videogame," he told us. "I have for plenty of films. The people who make the argument that games are more immersive and therefore dangerous should calm down."

But in truth we want games to be more affecting. They should be able to make us feel more than films, television and books. What 'No Russian' has highlighted

Avoiding 'bad taste' is preferable, but working at its boundaries is essential

to make up our own minds. "It's about choice," he insisted to us. "There are games that repulse me. And as a parent, there are games that I won't let my kids get anywhere near. But as long as people know what the content is like, I don't have a problem."

So the ratings system isn't trying to dictate taste to game publishers and Watson feels the public should be allowed to make up their own minds about

what content they do and do not find appropriate. Where does that leave the question of games stepping over the line? Is the line purely a legal one? Well, not exactly, as the Video Standards Council will be enforcing PEGI's ratings as law and making the final decision as to whether the content of a game goes too far. How it will behave we will have to wait and see.

And yet we cannot escape the reaction to 'No Russian', which had even

as much as anything else is that some developers still aren't well-versed enough as storytellers to justify the scenes they create. *Modern Warfare 2* is no worse than similarly rated war movies or dare we say it the real world, but its attempt to tackle an emotionally raw experience backfired because it couldn't separate the core idea of most games – to have fun – with the darker plot device it was attempting to execute. Because of this it jarred, as many games have done before, because what was taking place seemed to be making entertainment out of something quite disturbing.

Developers may still be learning how to make games that deal in grown-up topics, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't. While avoiding 'bad taste' is preferable, working at its boundaries is essential for the industry to really grow and mature. On occasion this will mean crossing a line into the inappropriate, but without testing these boundaries videogames will never reach their full potential.

Can Games Go Too Far?

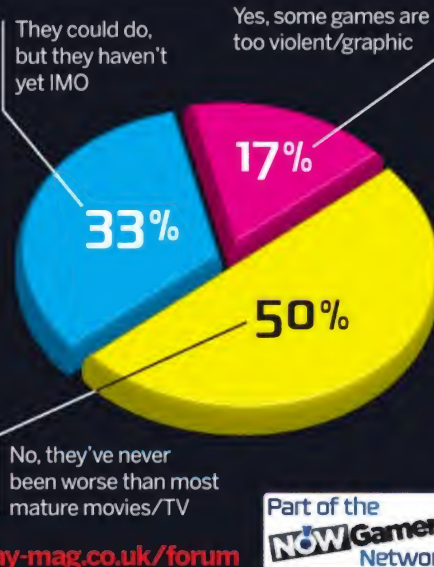
To be honest [No Russian] doesn't really feel bad, they are pieces of code and animation, it's not like anyone will try to replicate it. The civilians die whether you fire or not, though I put a lot out myself, I didn't laugh or feel too much joy in doing so – **UberCool_UberGoff**

I've seen lots of movies with terrorists as the main characters. What's the difference? One game with a different viewpoint and all hell breaks loose... you could even skip the damn level if you wanted to – **Mr healey**

Games have always been violent in one way or another, the problem is how detailed the graphics are now. There are always going to be people who say, "that's too far", but every country has a rating system in place so the younger gamers don't get those games – **rb1007**

How can you justify the level in *MW2* when the rest of the story has all the sophistication and depth of a very bad Eighties action movie? Is that level meant to be a standalone statement on morality? It's daft. There's no reason for it when you take the rest of the game into account – **Kalcaron**

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PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



● Bounties can be taken on at the player's leisure.

● PETA will be pleased to know the horses can be killed.

EVOLUTION OF A COWBOY

Was Darwin a lone rider?



IT'S INTERESTING TO see how *Red Dead* has changed over the years, from *Revolver*'s arcadey Japanese shooter set in the Old West, through Rockstar's intervention and change to a Spaghetti Western revenge tale, and on to *Redemption* with its 'GTA on horses' tag. You can see it's what the dev has always wanted to do with the game and it very much seems to be survival of the fittest, at least in the case of this game.



● It's nice to have a main character with real character in his looks.



● That is one muscular horse.

RELEASE DATE: APRIL

Red Dead Redemption

On a steel horse I ride... (it's not steel)

Each of the three regions in the game has a distinctive look.

Red Dead Revolver was the result of two development studios – first handled by Capcom, then picked up by Rockstar after Capcom dropped it. As a result we were left with a very good game, but something that didn't feel like it was a complete Rockstar product. We're not total sycophants for Rockstar, but it does have a discernible feel to its games. And as this sequel, *Red Dead Redemption*, shows with gusto – all it needed was to build the game from the ground up to create something that has real potential.

Red Dead Redemption looks like another winner for Rockstar

Our hands-off demo began in the fictional Mexican region of Nuevo Paraiso, with main character John Marston waking up at our portable save point – otherwise known as a camp – and taking off into the dusty wilds. After taking in the striking vistas and an impromptu death at the hands of some wild dogs, we arrived in the town of Chuparosa ready to take on some paid work. Wandering around the town you get a real feel for the place – there's no doubt that *Redemption* is a game steeped in atmosphere. From the look through the people that inhabit the area, the flora and fauna – including snakes, bears, vultures and wolves – and the music backing it all up, it's just engrossing. It just works.

We found a wanted poster on the wall and decided to track down the vagabond to capture him. A short ride away we found the bandit, holed up with some hired help.

While we did try our best to bring him in alive, by shooting him in the leg and lassoing him, something went wrong and we ended up killing him with a further bullet to the backside. Still, a payday is a payday. Combat played a lot like *GTA IV*, even down to the targeting reticule looking very similar and enemies react in the same impressive fashion. After cashing in the bounty we were shown a treasure hunt – rather than X marks the spot, treasure maps show local landmarks and lead the player from there.

We don't know how many of these are in the game, but they could be a wonderful distraction for those who enjoy a bit of exploration. Missions,

shopping and more fantastic-looking horses followed and were all of a similar standard – ie really rather impressive.

Backing up the standard play is the honour and fame system. Rather than your usual good/bad split, *Redemption* measures the two things separately. Honour is affected by how good or bad your behaviour is – if you help the lawmen, save the girl and bring in the bad guy alive then you're going to be an honourable chap. If you shoot everyone you're not. Fame is also affected by actions – you will naturally become more famous for your actions as the game progresses, but becoming famous for different reasons affects how people perceive or react to you. An infamous man of no honour is likely to be a target for many people wanting a quick-draw duel, for example. It's a simple addition to a rather standard feature in games, and

while we can't see it really shaking things up, it could be a nice change.

Rockstar was also keen to demonstrate the emergent gameplay that occurred throughout *Redemption*. The game world is massive, and even though we've yet to see it all we're certain there's always something happening wherever you go. You are free to take part in or ignore anything you see, you can help or hinder, rescue or pillage or do as you wish and it all feeds in to the honour/fame system mentioned before.

One example of the emergent gameplay came when riding along, quietly minding our own business. A man approached shouting for help, screaming he had been robbed, so we naturally slowed to aid this poor soul – before we could react, however, the man had thrown John from his horse and bolted. A quick whistle from John caused the horse to rear up, throwing the man from the saddle and a bullet to the face stopped his horse-jacking days for good. It was a short, simple moment but it made our smile very broad indeed.

What we saw still stuck firmly to the Spaghetti Western template, though there are definite touches of the more realistic *Deadwood* et al thrown in. Things are noticeably grittier, for one. *Red Dead Redemption* is looking like it will be another winner from Rockstar – atmospheric, good-looking, varied and huge – and we're very much looking forward to getting our hands on it.

Red Dead Redemption is being developed by Rockstar San Diego. Visit www.rockstar-games.com/reddeadredemption for details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- *Grand Theft Auto* with horses, and in the Wild West. Brilliant.
- An open, living world to explore that throws up constant surprises.
- It's nice to see a main character who actually has some character.
- The horses look absolutely incredible. They can also be killed.

READ ME

Red Dead Redemption is set during the early-1900s, which is around 20 years later than the period many of you will be used to from your favourite Western movies.



The lasso comes in handy to tame both horses and wanted criminals.



PREVIEW



Some Power-Plays aren't all that clever because sometimes all you need is a massive explosion.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2010

Split/Second

We're heading for disaster



The collapsing chimney Power-Play is stacks of fun.



Split/Second takes us back to the good old days of the early Burnout titles.

Think back, if you can, to **Play** 162. If you can't, then just look up *Burnout Paradise*, which was reviewed in issue 162, in the Playlist of this issue of **Play**. It got a much lower score than other *Burnouts*, and for good reason. It wasn't a nose-to-the-screen arcade racing experience with a risk/reward dynamic so finely tuned that absolute glory was just a hair's breadth from total disaster at any given moment. That was what we'd come to expect from the *Burnout* series, and we were disappointed that *Paradise* abandoned that form altogether in favour of a well-presented but clumsy open-world design. It left a gap in our gaming lives that's yet to be filled by any game on the PS3. Two *MotorStorm* games have come close but, while excellent, they weren't quite what we were looking for. What we

were after was something that combines a knife-edge risk factor with almost nauseating levels of speed and unnecessary amounts of destruction. Something like *Split/Second*.

While *Split/Second* brings back fond memories of the golden era of *Burnout*, it shouldn't be thought of as a clone. It's much like *Burnout*, and countless other arcade racers, but its USP really is an original and ingenious idea. This is a racer with weapons, but it's not the vehicles that are armed, it's the track.

The story, if you can call it that, goes that you play as a contestant on a TV show, which takes place on a collection of sets in an area the size of a small city. The sets have been rigged with various (mostly explosive) devices, and each car has a button that can activate the nearest device once the driver's

got enough style points from drifts, near-misses, air time and so on. Some of these Power-Plays simply open up temporary shortcuts, others cause shockwaves and obstructions, while the really big ones completely rearrange the layout of the course in spectacular fashion.

The advantage of arming the environment rather than the vehicles is that the effects can be so much bigger and so much more varied than your usual guns, missiles, banana skins and such. Plus it heightens that all-important risk/reward factor, as you can only activate a Power-Play that is in front of you, so there's always a chance that you might get caught up in the carnage yourself. Each track gets more fun the more times you play it because you start to learn how each Power-Play works and so start timing your detonations better and

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Plenty of spectacular environmental destruction effects.
- It's like a disaster movie where the disasters happen on purpose.
- Loads of 'WHOA!' moments to keep you on the edge of your seat.
- You get to mess up an airport with no civilians in it.

READ ME

Frantic arcade racer in which the environment itself can be used as a weapon. Fans of *Burnout*, *FlatOut* and *Twisted Metal* take note.

IN-DEPTH



● No real car models are used, which means you can smash them up as much as you like.



● The helicopter will drop things on your opponents if you ask it nicely.



● These girders get slammed onto the track and you have to weave around them.



● This chap might be eighth, but he has just nailed four or five of his opponents with a Power-Play.

steering yourself towards the safe routes. The breakneck pace of the game ensures that it never gets too easy, because you still need to recall exactly how a Power-Play works and judge exactly when to activate it in a matter of... well, a split second.

From what we've seen and played so far, *Split/Second* really lives up to its name. It's simple to pick up and play, but speed, tactics and timing involved mean that you really have to make numerous split-second

decisions during each race. It's looking more than capable of filling the *Burnout*-shaped hole in our lives, with the only real issues in the preview build we played being slight technical ones relating to AI and presentation. Nothing a few more months of optimising and tweaking shouldn't be able to fix, though.

Split/Second is being developed by Black Rock Studio. Check the website for more details: www2.disney.co.uk/disneyinteractivestudios/blackrockstudio.

CONCEPT CARNAGE

High explosive concept art

A CONCEPT ARTIST'S job can sometimes be a bit of a boring one. On most games they have to draw characters and weapons and locations and stuff like that over and over again, and it all has to be drawn in a uniform style. But the concept artists at Black Rock Studio have had rather more fun on *Split/Second* because every single Power-Play has to be conceptualised as well, so these guys don't just draw empty, still environments, they draw environments that have been torn to pieces by some sort of carefully orchestrated cataclysm.



FIRST LOOK



RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2010

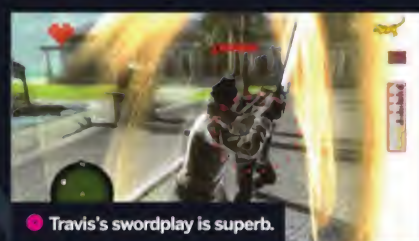
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise

It's never been cooler to be a geek

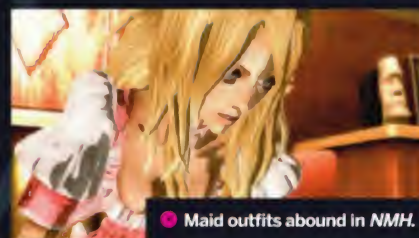
As a piece of otaku empowerment *No More Heroes* on the Wii was a huge success. Its hero Travis Touchdown went from gamer and wrestling fan to super assassin. It was an even greater success as one of the few hardcore games made for the Wii, but ultimately its humour, style and gameplay would be better suited to the PS3 and, fortunately, Grasshopper Manufacture has finally seen the light.

No More Heroes creator Goichi Suda has often talked about bringing his talents to the PS3 and while a remake of this two-year-old Wii game may seem like a tentative step, there's actually a bit of work to do on it. Most obvious is the change in control mechanic as *Heroes' Paradise* will be arriving in Japan prior to the launch of Sony's motion control tech. How the Wii controls translate will ultimately be the making or breaking of this upgrade.

Some things that we're confident will translate well, though, are the art style and humour. *No More Heroes* was



● Travis's swordplay is superb.



● Maid outfits abound in NMH.

praised for its good looks on Wii, but in HD it will look even better. There's also all the pop cultural references and gaming jokes throughout the story. Travis and friends are a tongue-in-cheek bunch who don't take the world of contract killing all that seriously.

No More Heroes remains in the hands of Grasshopper Manufacture. The official site for the game is at www.mmv.co.jp/special/game/nomoreheroes.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Amazing art style that mixes the dark edges of *Killer7* with recent anime hits.
- Ridiculous sense of humour with plenty of gaming and wrestling references.
- Open sandbox world for you to explore and find little odd jobs in.
- Hopefully some really good gameplay with no motion control nonsense.



HAND IN HAND

Flowing 360 combat. Degree, not console



HAND TO HAND combat flows well and is simplified so as not to clog the game up with unnecessary padding. Enemies can be disarmed, countered and otherwise battered with a range of rather brutal moves (including this delightful nutcracker), and physical combat and gunplay can be swiftly combined in one combo with the minimum of fuss.

MAN'S BEST FRIEND

Come with me if you want to live



TEAMWORK BETWEEN Jack and Shadow, his faithful tank-like pooch, is a key strategy in *Retribution*. If pinned down or faced by a particularly tough enemy, players can instruct the dog to attack, distracting the enemy to free enough time to attack, or even killing the enemy outright. Questions still remain over whether Shadow is too powerful, however.

OBLIGATORY COVER SYSTEM

Being shot at? Hide behind a wall



COVER PLAYS A very big part throughout the game, but really does nothing major to push the idea forward by any great leaps. It's a simple, functional idea and is more or less a mandatory requirement in most action games these days. Destructible cover brings a small element of strategy, but all in all this is nothing new.

LINGER IN SHADOWS

Dull the colours, be a dog



WE WERE SHOWN a section of the game where we were controlling Shadow, Jack's tank-dog. This section played differently to Jack's, being the obligatory stealth sections. Luckily, players do maintain a bit of choice in how they tackle levels, and controlling Shadow is a breeze. We're not sure if there are any more doggie levels, but it wouldn't be a stretch to imagine there are.

SHADES OF GREY

Brown is boring, grey is... grey



ALTHOUGH, AS FAR as we're aware, the whole game takes place in Grant City. Volatile is making an effort to ensure every area of the game feels distinctive. Every level has its own colour palette and general style, while at the same time tying in with the 'neo-noir' feel being aimed for. It might end up not really working, but we appreciate the effort.

RELEASE DATE: APRIL

Dead To Rights: Retribution

One man and his dog went to mow a meadow. WITH GUNS

The first three *Dead To Rights* titles were forgettable at best, so we weren't exactly looking forward to the latest in the series, *Retribution*.

It comes as a great relief, then, that on playing the game – which is a reboot, for want of a better description – we can see it has something going for it. It isn't a world-beater, but it could easily occupy the same territory as games like *50 Cent: Blood On The Sand*. A laugh. A muck about. A game. We went from not really caring to actually looking forward to this one, if only a bit, in a very short space of time.

Players control 'cop on the edge' Jack Slate as he travels through Grant City with his trusty K-9 hound Shadow and his pocket full of bullet-time, trying to unravel

downed enemy for as long as they want. We shouldn't forget the fact that every single weapon (grenades included) has its own specific kill move. This is the level of daft, excessive violence we're talking about. What's the betting it will be completely ignored by the media – unlike some more high-profile releases of recent times?

The cause of the bloody combat is Jack's repertoire of gunplay and hand to hand, both of which are employed throughout. It's simple to switch between combat modes and to command Shadow in the fight, and the 360-degree combat, while simple, works well, letting players battle enemies no matter where they are standing around them. Simple efficiency is key here, and you don't seem forced into tackling situations

in a definite manner.

The *Max Payne*-esque monologues seem misjudged at best, though we are admittedly lacking

We went from not really caring to actually looking forward to this one, in a very short space of time

a web of corruption, deceit and other such naughtiness you'd expect from an action game/movie. While the game goes out of its way to show you it has noir influences on top of the standard bombastic action, it's all still pretty much ignorable. The meat of the game comes through the combat, which is frantic, simple to control and over the top enough to be great fun. Violence plays a big part, and while controlling Shadow, players are able to rag the corpse of a

in context, and all in all *Retribution* really doesn't have any new ideas. We're not saying every game released has to be a paragon of original glory, but *Retribution* doesn't push any boats out, raise any bars or set any tongues wagging. We live in hope it will be a fun distraction, but at the same time we fear it may flounder into obscurity.

Dead To Rights: Retribution is being developed by Volatile Games. Check out www.deadtorigths.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A return to a series we felt had so much potential it never realised.
- The more dog sidekicks in games, the better.
- It's been made with fun in mind – something we can't argue with.
- It may be violence for the sake of violence, but it's funny.

READ ME

Dead To Rights, its sequel, the PSP version *Reckoning* and this one, were all developed by different companies.



RELEASE DATE: MARCH

Battlefield: Bad Company 2

Happiness is an armoured vehicle with a gun turret

Wait, haven't I just played this game online?

No, that was *Battlefield 1943*, which is a rather recent release, but you can tell the difference because *1943* is set during the Second World War and *Bad Company 2* is set in the modern world. Plus this has a single-player campaign mode.

So basically it's *Battlefield: Modern Warfare*? What a rip-off!

Whoa there. Let's tone down the hostility. *Battlefield* is one of the longest running shooter franchises around, and it left the Second World War behind a long time before *Call Of Duty* did with *Battlefield 2* in 2005. Developer DICE has even taken a look into the future with *Battlefield 2142*.

But what does it offer that's different from Infinity Ward's game?

Well, for a start it has a better sense of humour. DICE doesn't take itself very seriously, and as anyone who played the first *Bad Company* will tell you, the characters can be quite fun. Plus it has some of the most impressive destructible environments, lots of really well balanced vehicles and massive levels to explore.

But isn't *Battlefield* supposed to be about online gaming?

That certainly used to be the case, but *Bad Company* has been trying to add a really strong single-player experience for the first time that introduces players to the gameplay to help them online and also entertain them. Having said that, we got to play the game online for the first time, and can tell you it makes no compromises.

Well, I've been playing *Modern Warfare 2* to death online, so what's this got to make me switch?

Online shooters don't come with much better pedigrees or better balancing. DICE knows what it's doing online. There are four classes to choose from, and excelling at each will unlock new skills and tools for each class, and you can customise the weapons of each class too. Things like scopes and barrel lengths can all be adjusted to better suit your needs or style before you enter a match. The classes are Assault, Recon, Medic and Engineer. The most important thing though, is teamwork and making the most of all those awesome vehicles such as tanks, humvies, quad bikes and helicopters to really put pressure on your opponents.

As usual *Battlefield* is being developed by Swedish veterans DICE. Find out lots more about it and *Bad Company 2* at badcompany2.ea.com.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Large open maps with lots of destructibility so that no wall or piece of cover is safe.
- Some of the best run and gun action you'll ever get to play with in an FPS.
- Wide array of finely balanced vehicles that can be manned by multiple players.
- Greater focus on the multiplayer this time, meaning tighter online gaming.

READ ME

Blood is making a return to *Battlefield* with *Bad Company 2*. The only other *Battlefield* game to feature blood is *Battlefield Vietnam*.



STRONGER TOGETHER

Bad Company 2's co-op modes

MUCH LIKE *MODERN Warfare 2*, DICE has decided to separate out its co-op gaming from the single and multiplayer parts of the game. There are plenty of competitive online modes, but you can also play in two special co-op modes for up to four players, which are drop-in, drop-out for easy access. These modes will have their own rewards and trophies to unlock.



● Every type of challenge from previous *Skates* has been given a team twist.



RELEASE DATE: MAY

Skate 3

Those who skate together stick together

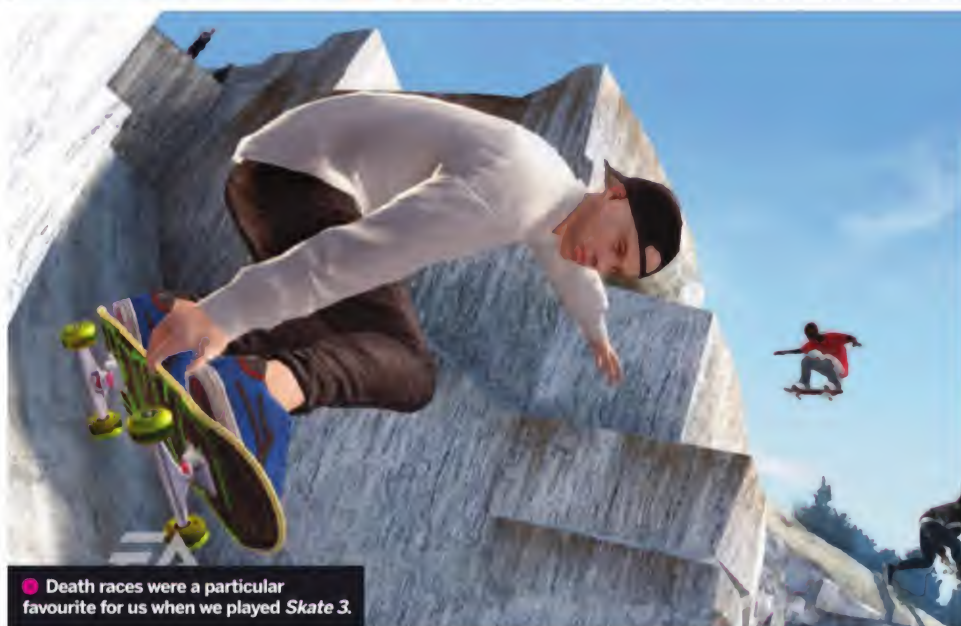
The changes that have been made to *Skate* in this latest iteration may not be all that obvious, but that doesn't mean they're not significant. Since *Skate* hit the PS3 back in 2007 it has redefined what we think of as a skateboarding game and forced Activision's *Tony Hawk* franchise to completely re-evaluate its stance. However, the core gameplay was so solid from the start that *Skate* is not a series that requires or would even suit yearly sequels, and that means something significant needs to be added each time to justify an expansion of the series.

This time out, the focus is being brought to bear on multiplayer gaming rather than any new tricks in the repertoire. There are a couple of new tricks, but nothing game-changing. What Black Box and EA have focused on is trying to harness the power and inventiveness of the online community like never before. This is being done by introducing a collection of team-based challenges for online play that test your collective abilities as well as reward individual skill, and we can say from first-hand experience that they're a lot of fun.

The first mode we tried was Domination, which is an Own The Spot style competition, with several spots to pull off tricks on within a set area. The team with the highest scores at the end of the time limit wins, but the back and forth of the contest is really where the fun lies. Team Deathrace is also made more interesting by its team dynamic, as points are awarded for each placing, and simply getting first place doesn't guarantee a victory. Lastly, 1-up is a team game where each team takes turns to set a score within 20 seconds of play that the opposition must beat. If they don't beat it they get a mark against them, and three defeats loses them the contest.

The great thing about many of these modes is that in some form or another they already exist within the *Skate* community online, and really all Black Box is doing is giving them official sanction. That's good, because we know they work and we know they're very popular. Throw in custom team names, logos and membership, and we think this could really help take *Skate 3* to a new level.

Skate 3 is being developed by EA's Black Box studio and you can find out more at www.eagames.co.uk/game/skate-3.



● Death races were a particular favourite for us when we played *Skate 3*.



● Team competitions mean if you fail your team fails with you.

BAG O' TRICKS

Skate 3 gets technical with new moves

THERE ARE TWO significant new tricks for this instalment in the series. The first is darksliding, which means standing on the wheel side of your deck while grinding. Simply hold R1 before kick-flipping into a grind. The other trick is the underflip, where you kick-flip but change the rotation of the board in mid air. This is done by doing a normal kick-flip and adding an extra flick of the right stick.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Same superb control mechanics that have helped establish this series.
- Excellent new multiplayer modes for team play should bring the community to life.
- Brand new tricks that expand your options further than ever before.
- Create a Skate Park function gives even more creative options to players.

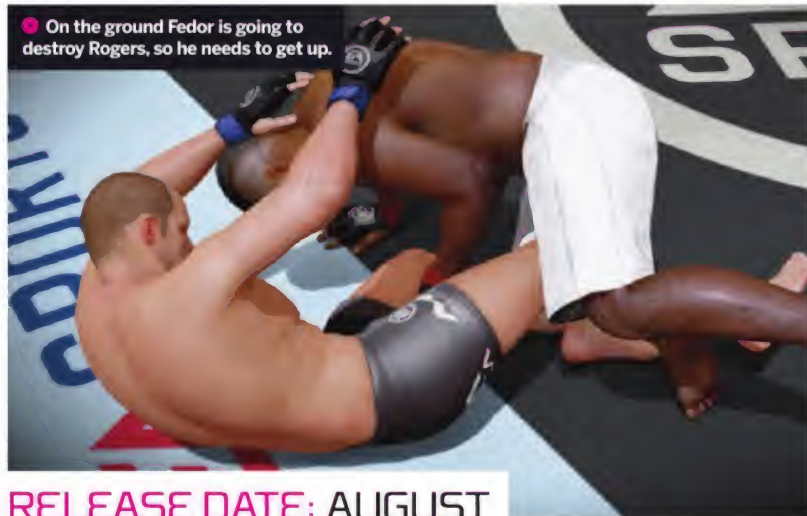
READ ME

Skate 3's new city, Port Calverton, loves skateboarders, unlike in San Vanelona. The University even has its own skateboarding team in the game.

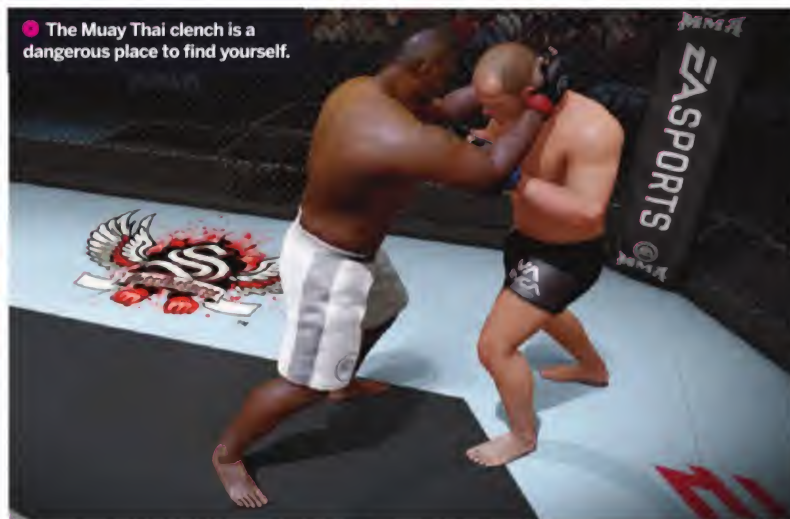
PREVIEW



● MMA has some of the best looking character models around.



● On the ground Fedor is going to destroy Rogers, so he needs to get up.



● The Muay Thai clinch is a dangerous place to find yourself.

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST

EA Sports MMA

Something new for the ground and pounders

This isn't the first time EA has had to join the party late with a sports title, and EA Tiburon, makers of the *Madden* series among other things, will likely take some heart from that. *Skate* managed to knock Tony Hawk's series from its perch and *EA Sports MMA* (meaning Mixed Martial Arts if you're not sure) has a far less established franchise in THQ's *UFC* licence to tackle. EA also has the awesome power of the *Fight Night* engine to bring to bear on its take on the world of cage and ring fighting, which we can attest counts for a great deal in the visuals department. EA is clearly putting every ounce of its weight behind this new title.

We have to begin by talking about those visuals though, and the way in which the *Fight Night* engine has been used to make the most out of this increasingly popular sport. The first thing to say is that this isn't just the *Round 4* engine with some kicking thrown in. EA Tiburon has done a lot of

work with this engine to make it fit the myriad of different moves and styles that the fighters in *MMA* will be using. This tweaking has not affected the basic good looks of the engine though, as the fighters we saw were very heavily detailed. As with *Fight Night*, you get a sense of muscle and bone moving under skin with *MMA*, and a texturing of that skin which is uncanny.

We had the pleasure of seeing *EA Sports MMA*'s version of Fedor Emelianenko – considered to be the best pound for pound mixed martial artist in the world right now – and Brett Rogers, a well respected fighter currently with the Strikeforce franchise whose only professional career loss has been to Emelianenko. These two were great examples of what EA Tiburon is trying to do with *MMA*, as each is a very different type of fighter. They move differently, their stances are different, their styles are different and their strengths are different. Every single one of these

things has been taken into account in their creation, and this we were assured will be true of every fighter. Unlike *UFC Undisputed 2009*, there will not be three kinds of striking style and three types of grappling style,

You get a sense of muscle and bone moving under skin with *MMA*, and a texturing of that skin which is uncanny

with every fighter accessing all those moves. Each character will have a tailor-made move set based on their actual fight history and preferences, and you'll need to use these to win the fight.

One example of the differences comes simply from the striking,

which is obviously something the *Fight Night* engine excels at. Emelianenko is quick on his feet and swings his punches with his whole body, working from the hips. Rogers is more of a boxer type with straight forward and

backward movements, fast jabs and always working from the shoulder. This also works into *MMA*'s parry system, where you can catch kicks and punches and then use striking or take down moves depending on your strengths. And you're never stopped from attacking in this game. Whether on

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Full world view of the world of MMA, with fighters from around the globe.
- Some of the best graphics we've ever seen working with the *Fight Night* engine.

- All the physics of *Fight Night Round 4* brought to bear for full body combat.
- An alternating development cycle means two years to make *MMA* and *Fight Night*.



With this rear choke applied, Rogers won't be lasting much longer.

STICK IT TO THEM

How the fight stick translates to MMA

LIKE *FIGHT NIGHT*, *MMA* uses right analogue stick control to throw punches. While some of the finer details of this are apparently still being played with, you have the basic jabs and heavy punches and the same instinctive motions to pull them off. The difference is of course that *MMA* is about more than punching, and to kick in the game you'll need to use a modifier. Once you've done that, you continue to flick and turn the right analogue stick for light and hard kicks to the head, body or legs. Working combinations of different body parts will mean bruising and cuts, and affect your opponent's potency in the fight.

your feet or on your back, you and your opponent can attack and make contact simultaneously and at all times, which means a fight can turn at any time and in any position.

But with *EA Sports MMA*, it's what we didn't see as much as what we did that gets us excited about this new title. EA is promising a game that represents the global nature of the sport, with cage and ring fighting and fighters from across the globe. There will also be a full Career mode with gameface technology so you can appear as yourself and will have the ability to customise your own fighting style to the same degree as the real fighters.

MMA is being developed by EA Tiburon, and you can find out lots more about that at mma.easports.com/home.action.

READ ME

Just after we saw *EA Sports MMA*, Fedor fought Rogers on the Strikeforce event, and inflicted his first and only defeat in his career – maintaining Fedor's record.



EA Sports MMA features a number of throws from all sorts of positions.



RELEASE DATE: MARCH

God Of War III

A mere 1,200 seconds with Kratos simply isn't enough, but we'll have to put up with it for the time being. Sigh...

00:34



WELCOME TO *GOD Of War III* where the men are men and the women are either absent or super-powerful gods who palm off their affections like village raffle tickets. But there's much to see and hear. This is our host, Kratos. Let's begin our tour.

05:52



MUCH HACK AND slash marks the early stages of this preview build of *GOW III*. After ploughing through a couple of easy platoons of enemies, you'll face off against a Centaur. The Cerberus Gauntlets and some sidestepping will deal with him. Finish off by gutting him.

07:59



NOT CONTENT WITH pitching a Centaur at you *God Of War* quickly follows this up with a Chimera attack. Best to watch out for Helios throwing fireballs at you too. Anyway, the Chimera has three stages of killing, the snake, lion and then goat head of the beast.

10:14



WITH THE HELP of Perses you manage to trap Helios and he's thrown across a chasm into a wall where you need to retrieve him. You can use the Harpies to cover distances by latching onto them with L1 and Circle and jumping from one to another.

12:35



KRATOS HAS NEVER had a great deal of time for civilians, and that doesn't change in *God Of War III*. For instance, this gentleman is on a ledge in Kratos' way, and with a quick tap of the Circle button his head is smashed against a wall and he's no longer a concern.

13:58



HELIOS IS STILL prone on the ground when you find him, but an elite guard gathers around him with shields. You could pull out the Cerberus Gauntlets again, but it's much more fun to jump on the Cyclops' back and use him as your weapon against them.

14:40



WITH HIS PROTECTION gone, Helios, Greek god of the sun, is at the mercy of Kratos. He wastes no time in introducing himself and his hands to Helios' throat. A rather gruesome decapitation follows, but you can now use Helios' head as a torch to reveal secrets.

16:53



AFTER A LITTLE stroll through a darkened mountain pass, Helios lighting the way for you, you reach a shaft of warm air that you can use to fly. Kratos still has the wings of Icarus and you must navigate this on rails, dodging debris to escape to the surface again.

17:12



IF YOU HAVE safely made it up the shaft and avoided some of Perses' fireballs, you will be launched into the sky. Now Kratos faces Perses and launches himself towards him, blades raised and a look of deep-seated rage in his eyes. It seems neither god nor Titan is safe.

SUMMARY

We've had the pleasure (and partial discomfort) of playing this particular section of *God Of War III* a few times now and it never ceases to entertain. It's graphically violent, ridiculously gory and gratuitously vile, but then that's *God Of War* all over isn't it? Would you really want it any other way?

THE LATEST ON... No surprises, no real newness, but some new information



DARK VOID

Publisher: Capcom Developer: Airtight Games ETA: January Format: PS3

JUST MISSING OUT on our review deadline this month was Capcom's alternate past Nolan North-athon. We're already getting mixed reactions from the office, with some loving what it brings to the table and some finding it a bit worse for wear. You'll just have to wait to see what we think.



ARMY OF TWO: THE 40TH DAY

Publisher: EA Developer: EA Montreal ETA: January Format: PS3

ANOTHER THAT JUST missed out on review, *The 40th Day* still has to sit and wait for us to judge it. Feelings about the first game run pretty strong in some, but we've seen one sequel already this year that learned from its mistakes, maybe this could be another.



DANTE'S INFERNO

Publisher: EA Developer: EA Redwood Shores ETA: February Format: PSP

WE'VE SEEN A fair bit of the home console version of *Dante's Inferno*, but we haven't seen much of the handheld equivalent, due out around the same time as its big brother. It's looking to be a full-featured version of Dante's trip to hell, rather than the usual PSP spin-off fare.



BLUR

Publisher: Activision Developer: Bizarre Creations ETA: Spring Format: PS3

WE HAVEN'T HAD any real update on *Blur* since the announcement it had been pushed to 2010, but our experience with *Split/Second* has us chomping at the bit to get more news. Will *Blur* be as good as Black Rock's offering? We don't know. And we want to find out.



FINAL FANTASY XIII

Publisher: Square Enix Developer: Square Enix ETA: March Format: PS3

WE'VE DECIDED TO go a bit quiet on the *FFXIII* front this month, in preparation for the game's release and our inevitable blowout review. A confirmed EU release date of 9 March popped up recently, as did a long, over-the-top launch trailer to set the mood perfectly. Excited.



3D DOT GAME HEROES

Publisher: TBC Developer: From Software ETA: TBC Format: PS3

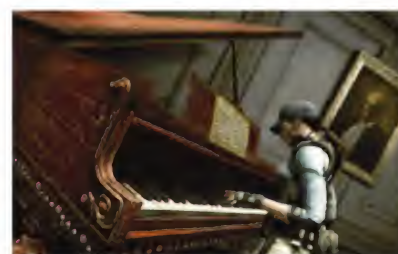
WE STILL CAN'T keep our eyes off this one, and it was announced in November that the game has a confirmed US publisher in Atlus. This can do nothing but bode well for a potential EU release, as the English translation part will already have been done. You know it makes sense.



JUST CAUSE 2

Publisher: Square Enix Developer: Avalanche Studios ETA: March Format: PS3

WE CAN'T WAIT to muck about in *Just Cause 2*, hence its position on our 'muck about' top ten. A confirmed EU release date of 26 March and some fantastic new screenshots have merely served to get us even more excited about this particular slice of ridiculous pie.



RESIDENT EVIL 5: ALTERNATIVE EDITION

Publisher: Capcom Developer: Capcom ETA: Spring Format: PS3

THE PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED 'director's cut' of *Resi 5* will be released as DLC, Capcom confirmed, after it was decided by an online vote. At least one new episode, characters like Jill Valentine making a return, motion control and other such nuggets interest us muchly.

NEW GAMES... Surprises, newness and new information, amazingly



MERC'S INC.

Publisher: EA Developer: EA LA ETA: TBC Format: TBC

THE DEATH OF *Pandemic* may not have been as total a loss as we all assumed, and EA has confirmed the existence of this next chapter in the *Mercenaries* series. This is so new and so information-sparse that we're not even sure if it's coming out on PlayStation 3 – it's logical to assume it will though, as EA has a good relationship with Sony's machine. We'll tell more when we get more.



BLAZBLUE PORTABLE

Publisher: TBC Developer: Arc System Works ETA: TBC Format: PSP

WHILE THE ORIGINAL *BlazBlue* still hasn't come out over on these shores, we did give it some love in our 90% import review, which is why we're excited by the prospect of it coming to PSP. It's only been announced for a Japanese release so far, but we're hopeful it will make it to our shores soon enough, so we can take our technical combat with us wherever we go.



GREED CORP

Publisher: W! Games Developer: W! Games ETA: Early 2010 Format: PSN

THE FIRST OF a proposed series set in the specially created *Mistbound* world, *Greed Corp* is a downloadable turn-based strategy title with some interesting ideas. Mining resources destroys the land they're found on, meaning you have less on which to build and expand – a nifty strategic element, but also a commentary on the devastating nature of climate change. Or something. We think.



VANCOUVER 2010

Publisher: Sega Developer: Sega ETA: January Format: PS3

OR TO GIVE it its full name: *Vancouver 2010: The Official Game Of The Olympic Winter Games*. Slips off the tongue like a figure skater slipping off the ice after landing a double-tuck jumping pirouette wrong. Anyway, we haven't seen much of this and it's out in about a month's time, which usually bodes badly. There's a tiny chance it'll be like Sega's fantastic *Athlete Kings*, but it probably won't.

RE:PLAY



Apparently most of you have been playing some game called Modern Warfare 2. Either that or making a very deliberate point of not playing it



This month's letters answered by:
Gavin Mackenzie,
Kiss chaser

For some reason this month, we've had more letters than normal asking us how to become a games journalist. Not sure why that is, but I thought I'd take this opportunity to answer them all at once. There is no special, secret way, but you do need to be persistent as there aren't that many games journo jobs to go 'round. To give yourself a bit of a headstart, set up your own blog, get lots of writing practice and try to make some contacts at game publisher PR departments.

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Never Say Never

Before I start I'd like to say that I've not bought the new *Modern Warfare* and now, I never will. Today I heard about the airport scene in *MW2* and, as anyone would, I wondered what all the fuss was about. I opened up YouTube and found a video of the scene and now I realise why it caused so much fuss.

Games are supposed to be fun, otherwise we wouldn't buy them and you wouldn't have a magazine about them. In terms of an FPS game, fun means a rewarding and realistic challenge. But *MW2* crossed the line. The airport scene is neither challenging nor fun. Shooting defenceless targets is dull and disgusting, two things most FPS games aren't.

Infinity Ward defended the level by saying that it's meant to educate people of

the horrors of terrorism. Why do I want to learn about the horrors of terrorism in my leisure time? I can turn on the news to learn about that whenever I want. Good game + pointless and disgusting level = one less customer for Infinity Ward.

Josh Ferriday, Bingley (dated 10 November)

Please ignore my rant I sent to you about *Modern Warfare 2*. I've been converted to the series now and will soon purchase the new release. I have read your fantastically witty guide to *MW2* etiquette [see www.play-mag.co.uk] and look forward to following it religiously once I get the game.

The *Modern Warfare* bug is going around fast and, as with swine flu, people are in their pyjamas off school or work

★ STAR letter



Modern Warfare 2 – resistance is futile.

wrapped up in a duvet with a hot chocolate and Tunnock's wafer bar in front of their PlayStation or Xbox.

Josh Ferriday, Bingley (dated 18 November)

What a difference eight days can make. To be honest, we pretty much agree with both letters. The airport scene is bad, but it's not worth boycotting the game over. It's brilliant online, especially when you play according to gentleman's rules.

Chain Combo

It didn't take too long before chain letters started appearing on the PS3 mail system. The usual things are being put forth, "Send this to 20 of your friends and get a £20 PSN card" or "Forward this message on and when it reaches 2,000 messages sent we will get *Halo* and *Left 4 Dead* on the PS3."

But the worst part isn't these messages, it's that there are people out there who believe that what they are reading is the gospel truth and will pass these messages on absolutely convinced that what the message said is true.

I took the bait on one of them and replied to the guy who sent it to me (it was regarding *Left 4 Dead* and *Halo*).

I said quite calmly and politely that there was no chance of an Xbox-exclusive title being ported based upon the PSN traffic, the reply I got to that was rather rude and included some very nasty words, he even called me a noob.

Is it the compulsion to want what we can't have that forces people to pass on these

messages? Or is it simply that they have nothing better to do with their lives than to pass on junk mail to complete strangers?

It's bad enough I need a spam filter for my PC let alone having to worry about the same thing on the PS3.

Ian White, Rayleigh

Yes, you're right. We got one that said we'd get exclusive DLC for *Modern Warfare 2* if we forwarded it to enough people. We told the person who sent it to us it was fake, and he was polite and appreciative seeing as he knows what we do for a living.

Anyway, to anyone else who's reading this who has received a message over the PSN encouraging you to forward it on to all your friends in return for some sort of reward... IT. IS. FAKE. Game publishers simply do not, ever, promote their products in this way so just ignore these messages and they'll hopefully go away.

Zombies Galore? Yes Please!

My name is Callum McNie, and I will attempt to address the notion of incorporating zombie mode into certain games.

First, *Assassin's Creed*. If it had had a changeable mode where everyone in the Holy Land shouted "BRAINS!" rather than "Good lord, he's killed someone!" then the 12th Century would have been a very

different place. Even this would have offered the game a little more variety.

Second, *FIFA*. Just imagine: hordes of flesh-eating football supporters tearing at the players, taking a penalty and 'accidentally' decapitating the keeper and no one caring about it, and replacing tackles with biting or wielding a chainsaw.

And finally, *MotorStorm: Pacific Rift*. The single-player is great already, but could be made even more special by having shotgun-wielding zombies shooting at you and leaping onto your bike, or perhaps driving through a sea of zombies with body armour and lots of sharp things attached to your mud plugger.

Callum McNie, Edinburgh



● According to the Department for Employment and Learning, zombies are flocking to the games industry for work.



● Halo on PS3: It's never gonna happen.



Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of Sega. For each letter we included this month, the sender wins a copy of Bayonetta, which is out now on the PS3 (£49.99). Age verification will be required.

STUPID letter

Timotei Buckfastion's Biggest Fan

In issue #184 you included the J'accuse book with the mag and never before have I laughed so hard at something in a book. These poor deluded individuals who think the likes of Tekken and MGS 4 are bad must be on drugs! I never thought I'd hear 'shit' and 'MGS 4' in the same sentence. The more I read, the quicker it degraded from something to laugh at to a complete outrage, so I say to all you idiots out there: if you hate the PlayStation's greatest games like DMC and COD then what are you doing with a PS3? Stop spreading your lies about terrific games, which you probably couldn't complete anyway.

Chris Brennan, Liverpool



● Objections to Play's J'accuse! book overruled.

You're right, the likes of Luca Allzegay, Timotei Buckfastion, Agrarian D, Che-Wooing, Banachek Zimbabwe, Enchilada Bambaattaa, Ichi Schillachi and Jamwel Fillion Bloberts are real idiots, which is why we only ever let them write for Play once each. Although we did give Timotei Buckfastion a second chance, but he blew it. The idiot.

We think what's wrong with these people, apart from being stupid, is that they don't see the point of things and fail to pick up on really obvious details, and before they've really thought it through they're ranting furiously about how outraged they were by a game. Poor deluded idiots.

All great suggestions. We hope the game development community is taking note. There's only one way to take this idea further and that's... puns. Bad puns.

So... 'Bite Night Round 4', 'Soul Calibreburgh', 'Ghoul Boarders', 'Crisis Corpse: Final Fantasy VII', 'Just Gores 2', 'Undead Or Alive' and finally, 'Holy Invasion Of Privacy Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve Dis... memberment!'

Whoah, they are bad.

F.A.Q.

My girlfriend has bought me an Xbox 360 for Christmas. I think I'll have to bury it in the back garden.

Michael McCarthy, Kiltalown

That's one way to stop it overheating.

I would like to thank my wife and naughty dog.

Gej, via email

We'd like to thank... oh, you know who you are.

When you think about it, is it really that bad to have a crush on a videogame character?

Lee Jones, Wirral

When you think about it, yes it is. So don't think about it, just feel it.

YOU'LL GET CHASED DOWN BY ALL THE DETHRIDGE CLAN... ANY BY PLAY ...RHUBARB

Neil Dethridge, via email

Guess what... I'm not a murderer! *cough*

Tom Robins, Nantwich

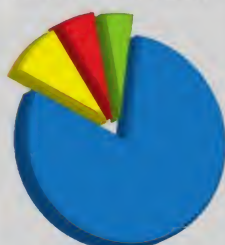
We'd never have got that.

Zombie modes in games? I'd like to see it in Resident Evil 6.

Adam Byrne, Bray

Now you're just being silly.

THIS MONTH, YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...



■ Modern Warfare 2 80%
 ■ Becoming a games journalist 9%
 ■ Zombies 6%
 ■ Yellow lights of death 5%

PLAY
GOPLAY
the forum...



The official Play and GoPlay magazine forum
 The home of the UK's longest running and best PlayStation magazine

FAQ Search Memberlist Usergroups
 Profile You have no new messages Log out [Tim]

Choice topics from the Play forum.
 Join the discussion at www.play-mag.co.uk

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: **Bully 2**
 I loved sticking the nerds in the trashcans, and giving wedgies, good fun, the bossman

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: **COD: MW2 prestige edition**
 Gavin's review for this is up. Here's the TL;Dr version
 SP = Bad
 MP = Good
 hazy89

SUBJECT: FIRST PLAY

Topic: **Battlefield: BC2 beta**
 It's a huge improvement over BFBC, and BF1943, it is great, the vehicles are perfectly balanced, the destructibility is cool, don't knock it til you've tried it.
 UberCool_UberGoff

Single? Short? Old?

I'd like to state for the record that I'm not against online gaming: if it wasn't for online, many great games would never have existed. What I am against is that I have to pay over £50 for certain games that hardly last seven hours and I should be happy because it has a "great multiplayer". I'm confused: storage mediums get larger but games get shorter while delivering an online mode to compensate? I work over 40 hours a week, the last thing I want to do after dinner is go online and mindlessly shoot loud kids from across the Atlantic.

The greatest games ever made had no online mode, yet were great value for money and had amazing plots: GTA, Fallout 3, Final Fantasy, Resi Evil and so on. Sure, with online gaming you get to play online again and again rather than toss the game away when you finish the main campaign and thus, I don't mind online gaming as an extra feature, but to make that mode the selling point while the actual game is a short generic FPS is a disgrace and what adds insult to injury is that gamers don't seem to be too upset about that; so my question is: am I just old?

Mo Golbo, Dublin

You don't have to be coy, we know you're talking about Modern Warfare 2. We don't think there's anything wrong with making the online modes the main selling point, but it's important that publishers and developers are honest about it to avoid upsetting customers such as yourself. You had the right to expect a substantial single-player component from Modern Warfare 2 given that COD, COD 2 and COD 4 all had them, but you didn't get it and you weren't warned about it. For



● Fallout 3 – who needs multiplayer?

what it's worth we tried to warn you in our review, which did say: "If you're one of those people that doesn't play games like Call Of Duty online at all, then we would hesitate to wholly recommend Modern Warfare 2 to you" and "it's clear now the campaign serves as a kind of support act".

The BURNING issues

The stuff we want to hear about!



- 1 Listen to our podcast at www.play-mag.co.uk/category/podcasts then tell us what you think.
- 2 How would you make Modern Warfare 2 players more gentlemanly?
- 3 Have you ever bought a game that you swore you never would?

REVIEWS

Playing bad games so you don't have to



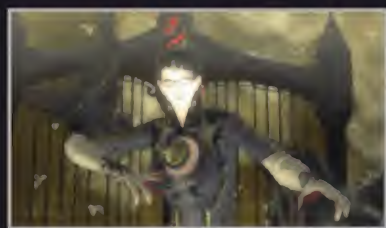
Dan Howdle

Reviewed: Bayonetta, Agarest: Generations Of War

Dan saw a man's face explode this month. There was blood and face everywhere. Sounds unpleasant to us, but Dan says this was the highlight of an evening of UFC entertainment. Ever since, Dan's been trying to make his own face explode by stuffing it with sweets. He spent £17 in a sweet shop, then £15 at a sweet market stall the next week.

currently playing: *Modern Warfare 2*

on review



70 Bayonetta PS3

Abatty one



72 Lego Rock Band PS3

Rock on, be glad



79 Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines PSP

Cold iron blade assesses sin

the rest

66 The Saboteur PS3

73 Band Hero PS3

74 James Cameron's Avatar: The Game PS3

75 F1 2009 PSP

76 Tekken 6 PSP

78 Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier PSP

80 Football Manager Handheld 2010 PSP

81 Invizimals PSP

82 Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron PSP

82 Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues PS3

83 Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja 5 PS2

83 Agarest: Generations Of War PS3



Alarm 2

**Chris McMahon****Reviewed:** *Band Hero*

Chris is the Kerry Katona of Imagine. He, like Kerry Katona, comes from the north west and, like Kerry Katona, has been known to get himself into a state, only to have his behaviour reported in the press. This month he bought some wine from a Kerry Katona-endorsed shop then drank it, embarrassed himself and had the story plastered all over page 67 of a popular national publication.

currently playing: *Assassin's Creed II*

**Dave Shaw****Reviewed:** *F1 2009*

Dave is off to Barcelona soon with his mum. Gossip columnists are reporting that Woody Allen is trying to buy the movie rights to Dave's story. 'Dave Mum Barcelona' will be a follow-up to *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* and will tell the story of Dave – a passionate games journalist – and the relationships he has with three exotic women during his stay. Meanwhile, his mum goes shopping for souvenirs.

currently playing: *FIFA 10*

**Samuel Roberts****Reviewed:** *Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron*

Samuel has a reputation for 'sitting there, being angry' but really, he's misunderstood. You see Samuel, like Dave Shaw, is a passionate games journalist who needs to keep his emotions close to the surface in order to produce work full of verve and flair. If you don't believe us, go to page 82 and read his *Elite Squadron* review. It's full of raw emotion.

currently playing: *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Saboteur

Listen all y'all it's a Saboteur



DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
Pandemic Studios
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Sandbox
Supports
720p, Downloadable
Content, DualShock 3
Age Rating
15+
Website
www.pandemicstudios.com/thesaboteur/

It's probably quite fitting that Pandemic's swan song is an amalgamation of genres that fails to form a cohesive whole, leaving us with a decent, fun game that has too many faults and glitches to really impress us. It seems to have been Pandemic's *raison d'être* over the last few years, from the broken mess that many of us loved for some reason (*Mercenaries 2*, 78%), through to the broken mess that none of us loved (*Lord Of The Rings Conquest*, 52%). It seemed to be taking a while to make a game and ultimately releasing something a bit worse for wear.

As with *Mercenaries 2*, however, *The Saboteur* is something you can have a fair bit of fun with should you give it due care. It isn't the type of game like *Uncharted 2* where it will go out of its way to be clean, polished and functional to aid you in your progress, point out routes to take and be fair and – dare we say it – quite simple. No, this is the kind of game that through a combination of both difficulty and... idiosyncrasies... manages to challenge as much as it frustrates. Don't misunderstand this statement, though – a playthrough of *The Saboteur* will have moments where you will want to

tear your hair out and it will be entirely the fault of the game, whether it's because of the overly touchy stealth mechanic, the convoluted and generally quite broken climbing system or by the fact that your car has hit a small pebble and come to a complete and instant stop (an issue which was present in the original *Mercenaries* game). You *will* be annoyed. But at the same time, you will have fun with it.

The Saboteur is a stylish GTA-style romp around Nazi-occupied Paris during

The reasonably light-hearted take on things never strays into anything approaching offensive

the early stages of WWII. Players take control of whisky-sippin', woman-lovin' Irish vagabond/race-car driver/explosives expert Sean Devlin as he aids the French resistance in fighting back against the evil occupiers. Now, if this all sounds a bit comic book, that's because it is. The look of *The Saboteur* is an obvious place to start, with the stylised black and white regions representing areas where Nazi oppression is at its strongest. Some reds, blues and yellows show to remind you your TV isn't broken and to highlight what side a character is on – blue for good, red

REVIEW

for bad – and the general feel of oppression is tangible in these darkened, dulled areas. The almost constant rainfall makes it just feel so right: it makes you as a player want to liberate, to help and to fight on the side of the French. Once you complete the right missions, usually by taking out an important target, an area is 'liberated.' While the Nazis remain, the fighting spirit of the people is brought rushing back, meaning the people of Paris will fight alongside you when needs be, all accompanied by a burst of almost saturated colour. It seems like such a simple touch when written down and, frankly, it isn't very clever or subtle, but it works perfectly and suits both the wartime era and Parisian setting to perfection. It isn't just the look of the game that makes *The Saboteur* a comicy world, with a story that combines action movie elements with a subtle dash of 'Allo 'Allo for an interesting, if not entirely straight-faced, portrayal of Sean's world. The French women are petite, large-breasted and have ridiculous accents that simply don't exist in real life, the Nazi women all wear tight leather and have ridiculous accents, the Nazi men are all blond-haired, blue-eyed monsters with ridiculous accents, the Gestapo all wear small, round glasses and have ridiculous

It just needs another layer of polish and it's never going to get it

accents, the French men are all womanising wine-drinkers with outaaaaageous accents, the British all have toffee wedged firmly up their noses and speak in posh (innuendo-laced) accents and Sean himself cares more about whisky and swearing than he does the war. He also has a daft accent. It's not exactly fine characterisation, but it does fit

Again, allies are absolute idiots who will get killed. A lot.



the mood well enough, and the reasonably light-hearted take on things never strays into anything approaching offensive. After all, you can't be mad at 'Allo 'Allo.

The Saboteur isn't just a GTA clone, though, and draws influences from some surprising areas. Stealth plays a big part in missions – should you choose to play in that way – and changing outfits and not behaving suspiciously in order to blend in are ripped straight from *Hitman*. There are even some extra kickers thrown in, such as the fact that you cannot steal a uniform if you shot the person who was wearing it. Gunshots show up, after all. *Assassin's Creed* comes into play through the climbing, which comes as a bit of a surprise to see when Sean reveals himself to

be part Spider-Man. It's useful for infiltrating secure areas and opens up missions to a good deal more options than if it were all ground-based, but it isn't implemented too well and will often leave you frustrated. There's also an obvious hint of previous Pandemic-'em-ups like *Mercenaries 2*, with vehicle handling feeling very similar to

IT'S ONLY WORDS

'Based on real events' means nothing

THE STORY BEHIND *The Saboteur* is apparently 'based on real events', though we wouldn't put too much stock in that claim. It's the simple story of a man who doesn't want to be involved in the war, dragged in to aid the French resistance and British secret service through a combination of circumstance and for revenge. He's also Irish, boisterous and a ladies man. As well as being pretty good at insults and swearing. It isn't a story you'd wet yourself over, but it fits the comic-book atmosphere perfectly well, though you won't find yourself playing entirely for the story.



anyone who's played that particular rough diamond. The standard extras we'd come to expect from a game like this are all present and correct, with side-missions, collection and destruction tasks littered across Paris, Saarbrücken, Le Havre et al, street races available to tackle, dozens of vehicles to collect and upgrade, perks to unlock to improve Sean's skills and a black market to trade weapons and ammunition on.

But as we said at the very beginning, *The Saboteur* suffers from Pandemic syndrome. It just needs another layer or two of polish and, well, it's never going to get it as the studio was closed not long after the game's release. Bugs and glitches rear their ugly heads at the most inopportune times and leave the player feeling they're taking part in something that's just ever so shoddy. Examples are many, but include some such as: a dodgy climbing mechanic, which sometimes doesn't let you climb a place the game itself lets you know you can and one time just bugged out and threw us to the other side of a wall; inconsistencies

STRATEGO A-GO GO

Perfect planning prevents potential to perish



MISSIONS IN *THE Saboteur*, shockingly enough, involve sabotage. What separates them from the norm is how the player approaches them, and the game caters for many playing styles. Examples: you can run in, gunning everyone down then trying a daring escape – or just hide

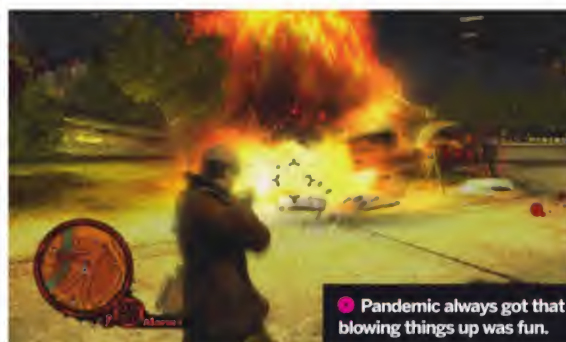


in a shed. You can opt for the stealthy, disguised route and infiltrate the target area. Taking out guard posts and other Nazi outposts will help with missions, as it means the enemy has less eyes on you. It's nice to have such choice, even if the rest of the game doesn't hold up so well.

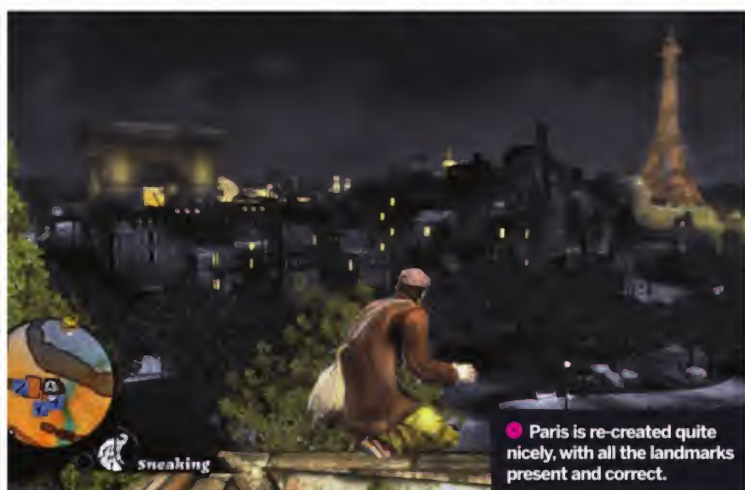
Or you could try



Mercenaries 2: World In Flames Issue 171
More broken than *The Saboteur*, but more charming, oddly. **78%**



● Pandemic always got that blowing things up was fun.



● Paris is re-created quite nicely, with all the landmarks present and correct.



Luc: We are going to meet a man called Duval Mingo.

● Luc is the biggest French stereotype of all time.



● Sean 'Altair/Ezio' Devlin does his best Spider-Man impression.



● Destroying fuel dumps will net you more valuable contraband.



● Look! It's an aftermath of some sabotage screenshot!

with the game itself, meaning there are certain animations in which Nazis cannot be shot, like when they are bending down to check a fallen compatriot; escort or protection missions where the escortee/protectee refuses to move until they're shot to death or you run them over out of sheer frustration; Nazi checkpoints that don't actually react when you smash through them at high speed in a stolen German army vehicle; civilians that collapse in a heap when you so much as look at them while driving; weapons unequipping themselves as and when they see fit, usually after climbing a wall to get a better vantage point on which to shoot or after a cut-scene, sometimes making fights a bit harder than they should be thanks to the unresponsive weapon select. We could go on, but this

would just turn into a rather long list indeed. Needless to say, there's nothing about *The Saboteur* that feels distinctly broken, per se, there's just a lot about it that could do with more spit and polish. Maybe Pandemic wasn't given the time, maybe it was forced to release something that is quite obviously not as well made as it wanted it to be, but it doesn't change the facts: this could have, and should have been a lot better than it is.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Although not hateable *The Saboteur* simply isn't a very good game. It's too rough around the edges and, sadly, it's exactly what we expected from Pandemic.

67%

Previously...
in Play



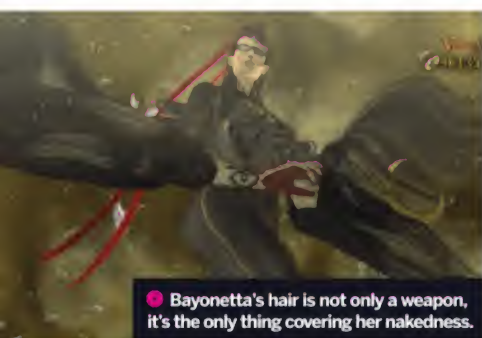
Previewed Issue 185
"There are bugs to be worked out... but it certainly comes across as solid"



● Hijack a massive gun, blow stuff up.



● Checkpoints are an irritant more than anything. Pesky Nazis.



RELEASE DATE: 8 JANUARY

Bayonetta

Rated 'I' for immature...

DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
Platinum Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action adventure
Supports
720p, DualShock 3,
Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
18+
Website
www.sega.com/
platinumgames/
bayonetta

When *Bayonetta* director and *Devil May Cry* creator Hideki Kamiya spoke out recently on the subject of the over-sexualisation of female videogame characters, he stated – in relation to games by Gaiden designer Tomonobu Itagaki – that “It’s a huge mistake to think like an idiot that big breasts on women seem erotic”. By that, we assumed he meant that games should stop objectifying women and just bloody well grow up a little. Having just played *Bayonetta*, we



now understand that he’s just more of a legs and ass man.

The assumption that games are made for teenagers – usually an observation made by non-gamers – is unavoidably confirmed in *Bayonetta*. We confess that in all of our gaming days, we have never seen such a comically over-the-top mixture of gore, violence and overtly sexual content. If you’d like to simulate the basic raw experience of *Bayonetta* while you wait for the game to hit these shores, take a bull-whip, some handcuffs, a gimp suit, a kilo of diced brisket, some pigs blood and a spanking paddle, drop it all in a leather-bound blender, hit ‘frappe’ and moan like a sex addict.

That’s just not as bad as it sounds. There isn’t even one ounce of po-faced seriousness with which the game regards itself, so it really doesn’t take very long before you begin to

laugh along with it, rather than at it. The key, believe it or not, is not that *Bayonetta* herself – an Umbra witch of extraordinary power – has guns on her feet. In fact, it’s not down to any single gimmick. Instead, the game’s strengths are both its variety and its consistent ability to surprise – a factor

The almost unimaginable number of combat manoeuvres allows you to feel cool no matter what buttons you bash

that runs the entire length and breadth of the game’s ten or so hours of running time. *Bayonetta* will constantly reward you with new things to play with, whether bought from the game’s shop – a bar known as The Gates Of Hell and run by shady Manga stereotype Rodan – or through simply exploring and collecting.

Bayonetta’s range of moves is almost too vast to comprehend, and complemented by

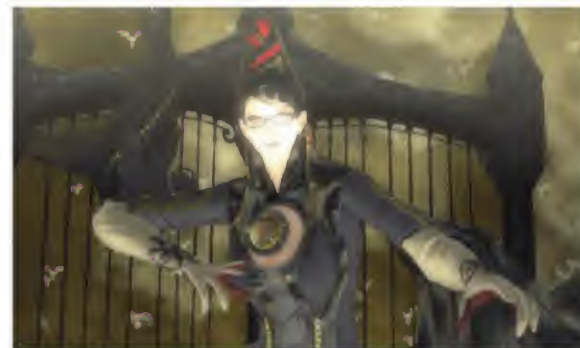


HAIR TODAY, NUDE TOMORROW

The world’s first pubic catsuit

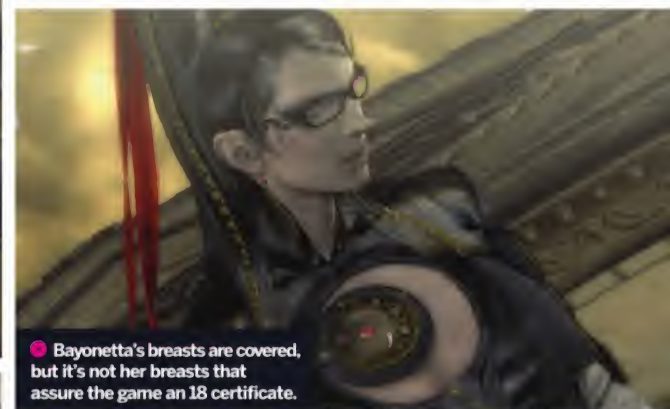
AS WELL AS a variety of demon-slaying guns and – much later in the game – swords and other melee weapons, Bayonetta’s primary death dealer is her barnet. It forms around her to ensure that we don’t catch glimpses of full-frontal nudity. However, because it often

transforms into a giant stiletto as well as a variety of boss-finishing hair monsters – a dragon, a bird, giant tearing hands and so on – Bayonetta is frequently completely nude for brief periods, with her rude bits covered only by Austin Powers-style camera angles.





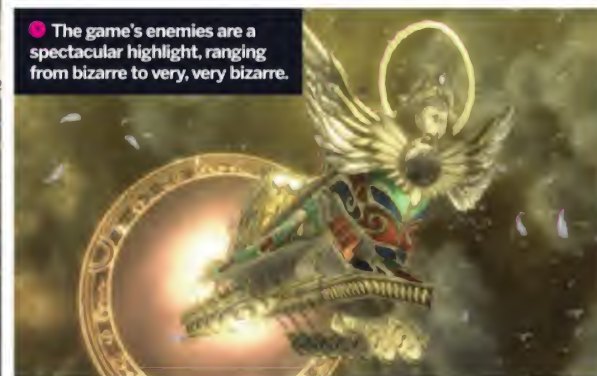
● This is a torture move. One that in this case, sees Bayonetta slicing the groin of a sex demon. Yes, really.



● Bayonetta's breasts are covered, but it's not her breasts that assure the game an 18 certificate.



● Enemies are little more than well-designed gore sacks. See how they explode?



● The game's enemies are a spectacular highlight, ranging from bizarre to very, very bizarre.



some of the slickest animation we've ever seen in a Japanese action-adventure. And luckily, there's no need to learn them all unless you feel you have to as a completionist. In fact, the almost unimaginable number of combat manoeuvres allows you to pretty much feel cool no matter what buttons you're bashing, making for an ultimately rewarding and exhilarating experience, especially when you discover something special and actually take a time-out to go find out how you did it. Assisting you further in learning new combos, the game's Loading screen contains a moves list and an area in which to practise. Just as well really, since our one major criticism of the game is its laborious load times – a gameplay-obfuscating factor that even rears its head when you pick up new items.

For a few years now, Japanese gaming in the West has seen some steady decline. In a move to stem the flow of revenue haemorrhaged by the nation's industry,

there has been a tide of statements from its key players, each surmising that it needs to Westernise to regain former appeal. When you really think about it, though, back in the day, we didn't buy Japanese games because they were just like American ones. We bought Japanese games because, lacking any shared social reference whatsoever, they were stark-bollock mental.

So while the likes of *Final Fantasy* and arguably *Devil May Cry 4* have, broadly speaking, been run through the Western filter, *Bayonetta* is perhaps the nuttiest Japanese game we've ever played. It's as if Kamiya himself has realised that it's the national freedom of imagination and its culturally boundless creativity that made the country's gaming industry among the strongest in the world. And for that reason he refuses to budge, to relent nothing to a logical plot or the enabling of Western-passé character design. As a result, *Bayonetta* is twice the game.

It's immature, it's brash, it's loud, it's nonsensical, bizarre and overtly sexual (note, we didn't say sex'y on account of game cameras flying at high speed into Bayonetta's gusset isn't much of a turn-on). But at the same time, it's so tongue-in-cheek that all of that somehow gets alchemically transmuted into lovable, daft, exhilarating, awesome and titillating. *Bayonetta* is all those things, but with it, in pure gameplay terms, simply one of the finest action games we've ever played – imaginatively created and masterfully executed in every conceivable way.

Dan Howdle

VERDICT

The most over-the-top, unremittably silly, astoundingly inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.

93%

Or you could try

Devil May Cry 4 Issue 163
Even Dante and Nero combined aren't the equal of the Umbra bondage witch. 89%

REVIEW



● Harmonix and Traveller's Tales have sacrificed difficulty for accessibility and fun.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



● *Lego Rock Band* isn't shy about imitating its spiritual prequel, right down to the opening cut-scene.

Lego Rock Band



If only it had featured 'Brick' Astley...

Lego Rock Band is not quite what it seems on the surface. Seemingly pitched perfectly at the younger demographic, it only takes a quick peek through the tracklist to realise its appeal is slightly more diverse. While the brick-based toy is primarily aimed at children, it's a pastime nearly everyone with a pulse can enjoy. To this end, Harmonix and Traveller's Tales have gone for the wider market.

Naturally, at *Lego Rock Band*'s core is the tried and tested formula we've all come to love. The twist comes in the form of the characters involved. Seeing a group of Lego

The developers have done a fine job in crafting a game that uses the licence to warm your heart with joy

musicians unleash to the music is oddly cute, and the many additions do take a step to providing a more welcoming experience. Fail a song and you'll be given the chance to continue, depending on how many 'studs' you have. Carry enough and you'll return to



● We're not sure how a man made of Lego would play the guitar, but we also think it's pointless thinking about it.

rocking within the next few notes before being given the chance to win back your in-game currency to safeguard against making the same mistake. Although it's a smart idea, and a great one to ensure children don't become frustrated, it ultimately makes little sense. It

never takes much to gain these life-savers back, meaning it's highly unlikely anyone will ever be booted out of the song entirely. Why *Rock Band*'s always popular No Fail mode wasn't used as the default choice is baffling.

The more friendly feel is continued in the very watered down difficulty levels. Masters of the genre will find little challenge here, even on Expert, a clear sign that the intended audience are beginners.

With this in mind, both developers have done a fine job in crafting a game that uses

its new-found licence to warm your heart with joy. Certain 'boss' songs take the Lego franchise and insert it into some of the most unexpected places, the highlight of which comes in a bang-on replica of the *Ghostbusters* video. Trust us when we say you can't help but smile.

With a few more tracks *Lego Rock Band* could've been the perfect spin-off for the gaming family, but it's hard to truly recommend it when the difference between this and the core product is a whopping 39 songs. Admittedly all the music on the disc can be transferred to *Rock Band*, or individuals who fall in love with the Lego models can start downloading *Rock Band* DLC into this title instead. Still, families who want a rhythm action game that aims for fun over difficulty will no doubt be pleased, which seems to have been the point from day one. Mission accomplished.

Simon Miller

VERDICT

Lego Rock Band does everything it sets out to do well, and will please the family who wants a game every generation in it can enjoy. The shallow tracklist and short-lived experience do harm things somewhat, and stop it getting the same accolades as its bigger brother.

75%



● The stud gameplay mechanic is a little odd. Reusing the No Fail option could've been a better choice.



● Some of the characters are too cute for words, and we say that in the manliest of ways.

Or you could try



Rock Band 2 Issue 179
This is easily the best rhythm action game currently sitting on store shelves 96%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Neversoft
Price
£49.99 (game only)
Players
1-4
Genre
Rhythm Action
Supports
1080i, 720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable Content, Dolby Digital 7.1, Guitar Hero peripherals
Age Rating
PG
Website
www.bandhero.com

Band Hero

Band Hero, or Bland Hero?

As soon as we went to select a character, *Band Hero* made its stance perfectly clear. All of our favourite musicians were there:

Casey Lynch, Clive Winston and Eddie Knox were all ready to rock, but they weren't the grungy rock stars we've come to know and love. Here the characters were transmogrified by the taint of saccharine pop: Johnny Napalm's mohawk has turned into something out of a Brylcreem advert, Judy Nails' face is all but devoid of metal piercings, and Axel Steel, where on earth has your mullet gone? Presented to us was a watered-down, family-friendly version of our favourite hellraisers, and this illustrates exactly what *Band Hero* is. It's *Guitar Hero 5* re-skinned for the mass market; rhythm action for tweens.



It certainly looks and sounds more *X Factor* than Ozzfest. This is *Guitar Hero* filtered through the mind of Simon Cowell and designed by Louis Walsh. The visuals are full of pinks, purples and sparkly things, and even the animated cut-scenes are packed with stuff we imagine is 'in' with the younger generation, like YouTube, mobile phones and gossip mags.

Guitar Hero aficionados will see that below this sugary veneer is the usual setup, utilising exactly the same structure as that found in *Guitar Hero 5*. Just don't expect to find any meat-crunching riffs hidden away in the soundtrack, unless you choose to import songs from *GH5* or *Greatest Hits* for a small re-licensing fee. Conversely, you could transfer the songs here over to *GH5* and watch Kurt Cobain mime along to Spice Girls' *Wannabe*, causing the dead rock star to roll so hard his grave will probably unearth itself.

Band Hero is packed to the seams with emo and pop – it's a game where No Doubt's *Don't Speak* is the epitome of the rock ballad and Fall Out Boy are considered metal. As an overall product it lacks the charm, humour or inventiveness found in Harmonix's own mass-market title *Lego Rock Band*, satisfied with offering nothing more than a simple re-skin and Top 40 picked tracks.

But rubbish set list aside we have no problem with *Band Hero*. It's a cynical



This is *Guitar Hero* filtered through the mind of Simon Cowell and designed by Louis Walsh

product, sure, and the physical embodiment of the increasingly commercial relationship between music and games, but if it provides a platform that will siphon off the pop nonsense that has tainted *Guitar Hero* titles in the past, then it's A-okay with us. Hopefully from now on our *Guitar Hero* titles can stay focused on the rock that inspired them.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

It's down to your taste in music, of course, but the cheesy pop and irritating emo here don't do the *Guitar Hero* template justice. The whole package feels like a full-price re-skin and track pack, meaning our socks remain firmly not rocked off.

68%

In this series



Guitar Hero: Metallica Issue 179
Honestly, *Master Of Puppets* trounces *Just A Girl* any day of the week. **88%**

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

James Cameron's Avatar: The Game

Stick to your guns or go native



DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Ubisoft
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action/Adventure
Supports
720p, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
12+
Website
avatargame.uk.ubi.com

Basically the bog-standard movie tie-in we always expected it to be, *Avatar*'s little twist is that it's actually two games in one, or very much tries to be, anyway.

As a separate story to the film, it doesn't really explain the hows or whys surrounding the fact that, as a human marine who's landed on an alien planet called Pandora, you're able to somehow project your consciousness into one of the lanky blue aliens, effectively becoming the Na'vi species, with extra speed and agility. But that's how the first hour or so plays out, allowing you to acclimatise yourself to the skills of your human, who's all about heavy firepower and cool gadgets, like air strikes, to get by in the game's various

Plays out like a rather generic third-person shooter

hostile jungle-based environments, or the aforementioned Na'vi, who prefer the hands-on approach, beating the humans up with big sticks, or firing arrows when they can't get close enough.



The marine's enhanced weaponry comes at a cost, as even Pandora's plants are out to get the human invaders.



The Na'vi's melee style often becomes trying as you're cut to ribbons by the enemy's big guns.

You're soon urged to choose an alliance, however, which allows you to stick with the conquering humans or go native, as it were, and protect the Na'vi people from the military onslaught. Both play out like rather generic third-person shooters; running and gunning, climbing

trees, destroying key objectives or finding characters or objects to aid your cause. Even though the two characters move and fight somewhat differently, lazy parallels still rear their heads in the long run, mostly in terms

of special powers or vehicles available to either side, with the Na'vi version of a marine helicopter being a weird dragon thing, or the marines' tech ending up eerily similar to the Na'vi's more spiritual approaches to upgrades. The only major difference between the two campaigns is that, arguably, the Na'vi one is harder, as you spend the majority of your time besieged by human machine guns, which rip you to shreds from a distance as you wave your sharpened mango in useless frustration.

Still, the EXP system ensures that both factions stay suitably fit for task as the game proceeds. Each enemy you kill or quest you complete adds to your tally, gradually unlocking weapon enhancements or new special moves. There's also a bonus Conquest mode, available from the in-game teleporter map, which lets you dispatch your faction's troops around the planet to attempt to conquer more land, successes boosting your experience points even further.

That's about it for *Avatar*, really. The visuals are fair but never spectacular, playability-wise it plods along but never really takes off, but as an alternative exploration of James Cameron's latest universe, it's a fair old stab at the Hollywood-to-console treatment.

Peter Gothard

VERDICT

While it's not exactly *Aliens*, it's no soggy *Titanic*, either. Bad movie licences are ten a penny on the PS3, but *Avatar*'s not one of them. It's not going to set your world alight with gaming glee, but if you're a fan of the movie, you could do worse.

64%



Each faction has access to vehicles, with the Na'vi's choices often recruited from Pandora's weird animal kingdom.

Previously...
in Play



Previewed Issue 184
"Avatar, we suspect, is going to lay on some pretty thick messages about the value of life."



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

F1 2009

An average game, unless we're very much mistaken...

DETAILS

Publisher
Codemasters
Developer
Sumo Digital
Price
£29.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Racing
Supports
Ad Hoc Wi-Fi
Multiplayer, TV in/out
Age Rating
3+
Website
www.formula1-game.com

Yes, you read that correctly. After wresting the licence to produce Formula 1 titles from Sony – back in May 2008 – Codemasters has been hard at work producing a home console entry to do the sport's intensity justice. Lacking time to piece this together at short notice, we're instead left in the unusual situation of playing the 2009 season's official handheld game, weeks after Jenson Button has recovered from his greatest ever hangover. That's the modern economy for you, folks.

With its dual directional controls and display still razor-sharp in a competitive market, there are few genres to which the PSP isn't suited. Formula 1 racing, however, appears to occupy one such void. Anyone who has ever sampled the millimetre-perfect obsession of Geoff Crammond's *Grand Prix* series on PC will know just how minute a

steering adjustment can lie between a podium place and the knacker's yard. Racing at upwards of 150mph isn't a forgiving business after all, and it's testament to Sumo Digital's racing experience that this knife-edge feeling is present here. Unfortunately, the requisite set of tools to help players escape from such danger aren't. Opening-corner pile-ups, delicate overtaking manoeuvres, even particularly tight pit lane entries – all situations made infinitely more perilous by analogue controls that require impossible degrees of accuracy and D-pad inputs built to make top-speed bends less bother. In short, neither control system allows satisfactory control of your vehicle at the sport's most thrilling moments.

This is a genuine shame, due to several factors. More superficially, an impressive

attempt has been made at making the field seem alive with competition, especially given the available resources. Car models are about as realistic as they would be if you squinted while watching TV, while each race seems composed of a believable fractured collection of personal squabbles, rather than relying on rubber-band mechanics to keep things

An impressive attempt has been made at making the field seem alive with competition

interesting. Physically, too, Sumo's work delights, giving appropriate weight to each vehicle, and suitable punishment to those who try to drive like they're playing *OutRun*. What's more, a wealth of arcade challenges covering various not necessarily race-based skills features, that should arguably have been brought to centre stage for the control reasons detailed above. All in all, this is a bit of a good game spoiled – think of it as playing *Race Driver: GRID*, only with boxing gloves on.

Dave Shaw

VERDICT

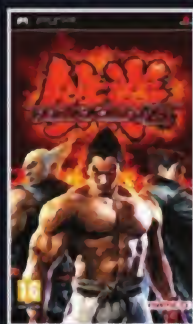
A feature-rich racer hamstrung by inaccurate controls. In fairness, importing such a regulations-heavy sport to PSP would always be a difficult one.

66%

Or you could try



OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast Issue 139
Arcade driving infinitely better suited to the medium than *F1 2009*: 93%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Tekken 6

If the next game features Azazel it's getting 20%

DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
Namco Bandai
Price
£29.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Beat-'Em-Up
Supports
Ad Hoc Wi-Fi Multiplayer,
TV In/Out
Age Rating
16+
Website
www.tekken6-official.eu

It was only a few months ago that some young, handsome buck reviewed the PS3 version of *Tekken 6*, awarding it a massive 94% and declaring it one of the best beat-'em-ups available. Now it's the turn of the PSP conversion, and we really didn't expect it to impress us as much as it did, to be honest.

The first thing that sticks out about *Tekken 6* on PSP is the look of the thing. While it obviously doesn't have the fidelity of the home console version, it still looks absolutely brilliant – easily one of the best-looking games on PSP and a reminder that the system really does pack a fair punch. Action is smooth, flows well and we saw no slowdown or graphical break-up of any sort during our time with the game. In fact, it has such a clean, crisp look that it could be argued that it looks better than the PS3 version in some way – it's certainly a lot cleaner looking, and isn't muddled up with motion blur and other filtering processes in place to help it run at a fair whack. Obviously

this is purely subjective, and from a technical standpoint the PSP is trounced, but you get the point.

As for the game, you would probably be unsurprised to read that it plays pretty much exactly like its bigger brother. All the moves and animations are present and correct, and there are few control issues with the PSP face buttons and D-pad that can't be sorted with a bit of hand movement. In fact, the main issue in this regard is the onset of PSP claw after extended play.

There really is no other way to describe it than: it's *Tekken 6* on PSP. What this means, however, is that Azazel is still the cause of much industrial language being spewed out by any and all who play against him. While we initially thought his difficulty/cheapness level might have been tweaked to make the fights... well... easier, it turned out we were dead wrong. He's still a massive, crystal, dragon-like cheat who needs a slap.

One omission from the PS3 version is Scenario mode, which is abandoned altogether. While we wouldn't defend the mode as a high point of the *Tekken* series, it is still a decent distraction so it's quite sad to see it isn't present. While there is nothing directly in its place, there is a new mode to help players rack up cash quickly – Gold Rush. It's a series of battles that encourage players to hit different moves and avoid

This is a fantastic package and another great PSP beat-'em-up

being hit back in return for money. Simple, effective and surprisingly fun.

As with many mainly multiplayer games that make the transition from small screen to even smaller screen, *Tekken 6* can suffer a bit depending on personal preference. Those who want to play a beat-'em-up in nonstop bouts against mates are going to need to find one or more friends with PSPs,

THE AZAZEL TEST

Never say we don't feature science in Play

WE MADE SURE to point out in the review just how annoying Azazel, the final boss, is. He's cheap, irritating and spams the hell out of moves. But we weren't satisfied with merely saying so, and decided to employ some science to see how long people can last against the irritant before losing their

rag, quitting, or swearing: Jon managed almost two 60-second rounds before claiming the game a cheat; Gav one and a half before exclaiming a rude word; Ian about a round before nearly weeping; and Nick managed about ten seconds before the abuse began. Azazel: you fail the test.



● The ability to kick pigs has been carried over from PS3.





● Lei is still a top fighter.

● Customisation can have some interesting outcomes.



CAMERA(UP/DOWN)
ROTATE CAMERA
ZOOM IN
ZOOM OUT
SELECT BACK



● Intros and outros are present and correct.



● Yoshimitsu still looks big and mental.

● Another match-up for the ages.



● Miguel has become a fast favourite around here.

in order to take part in some wireless action – no infrastructure multiplayer here, though with the issues the PS3 version suffered this might be for the best. Those happy to grind their way through a handful of modes, unlocking new outfits for characters, prologues, ending movies and memorising every aspect of each of the 40-plus characters are going to have a lot of fun. Especially if they take a lot of long train rides (or even short bus rides, come to think of it).

We encountered one particular technical hitch with this version: music and voice tracks would intermittently cut out, leaving us with eerily quiet battles going on. While it isn't a game-ruiner, it certainly shouldn't be happening in the first place. Other than that, the only real fault we could think of is the missing Scenario mode – and it's debatable whether that's really something that many people are going to miss, as it wasn't that great to begin with. No, this is a fantastic package and another great PSP beat-'em-up to add to the pile.

We should make something clear, though: whereas the PS3 didn't have any 'proper'

Tekken game to compete with the release of *Tekken 6*, the PSP does – something almost as good, just as feature filled, without Azazel and available a lot cheaper. This is the best *Tekken* game on PSP, no doubt, but it scores lower than *Dark Resurrection* for the reasons outlined above. If you're the type who cares about a saving of around £15 and don't mind losing out on a few extra characters and a couple of extra touches, like Rage mode, it's worth opting for the older version. On the other hand, those that aren't worried about a £30 investment should definitely opt for *Tekken 6* – it's by far one of the best fighting games on the handheld.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play, *Tekken 6* is the best game of the series on PSP. That's not to say it's entirely essential should you already own *Dark Resurrection*, however, but it still comes very highly recommended.

90%



● Let's play a game: what happens next?



● Not the best place to put one's face.



In this series



Tekken: Dark Resurrection Issue 143
The other best Tekken game available on PSP: 92%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
High Impact Games
Price
£24.99
Players
1
Genre
Platform/Adventure
Supports
TV In/Out
Age Rating
12+
Website
[www.us.playstation.com/
PSP/Games/Jak_and_
Daxter_The_Lost_Frontier](http://www.us.playstation.com/PSP/Games/Jak_and_Daxter_The_Lost_Frontier)

The Precursors haven't left a very good legacy

If there's one problem with *Uncharted 2* it's that it forced Naughty Dog to abandon the *Jak And Daxter* series; one we'd love to see a PS3 update of. For now, though, we have to put up with *The Lost Frontier* and its substandard additions to the J&D universe.

Picking up after the events of *Jak X*, *Frontier* sees the titular twosome and Keira on a quest to save the world, again, as there are some Eco problems and they're going to kill everyone. Or something. Surprisingly, it ends up as a quest to find an ancient artefact that can, even more

The meat of the game is standard Jak And Daxter fare

surprisingly, save the world. Surprisingly to the power of ten, this involves going on collect-'em-up quests all around the world. Safe to say, story alone isn't a reason to play this.

The meat of the game is standard *Jak And Daxter* fare, with all the exploring and



Weapons and armour can be upgraded on aircraft.



Dark Daxter levels have simple puzzle elements, but are quite dull.

platforming you would expect from the series. An upgradeable gun, new Eco powers and the inability to change between Dark and Light Jak are all that seem to have been added, alongside awful targeting, a painfully bad camera that decides to show snapshots of random areas for no reason and some pretty rosey puzzles. That's not to say it's all bad – while

it's merely serviceable at best overall, the idol teleportation puzzles are quite fun. Other than that, though, few smiles will be raised.

Flying sections join the standard platforming, and act as hub areas for side-missions, progressing the main quest and generally mucking about. They work fine, the aircraft you collect are distinct enough from each other and combat is simple enough, but it's not exactly the kind of thing you find yourself craving a quick blast on. The addition of 'Daxterjacking' just smacks of desperation,



Aiming can be a real problem.

throwing in some fairly redundant QTEs and letting the little orange twerp fit in some more 'witty' one-liners.

It's a shame that *The Lost Frontier* feels as rosey as it does, as there was real potential for it to be good – other games, such as *Ratchet & Clank* on PSP prove it can be done. Unfortunately, this is just a bit too dull to be anything more than a rent/borrow recommendation. There are distractions to keep you plugging away, but nothing really draws you in wholesale to the world.

Ian Dransfield

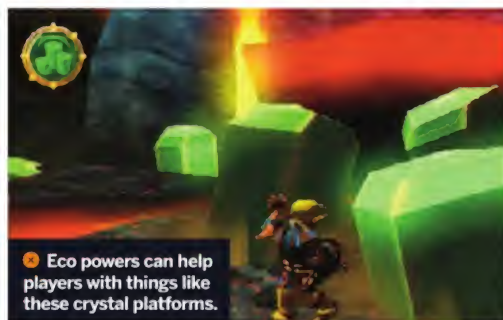
VERDICT

It looks nice but plays a shockingly average platform game. The Dark Daxter sections are poor and air combat is forgettable. *The Lost Frontier* is one big missed opportunity, and we can't wait for Naughty Dog's return to the series.

59%



The little orange idiot on his shoulder really isn't funny.



Eco powers can help players with things like these crystal platforms.

Or you could try

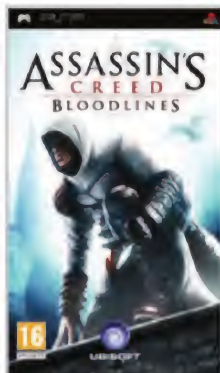


Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters Issue 154
Another of the PS2 to PSP crew, and a much better example than *The Lost Frontier*. 78%

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines

Nothing changes in two millennia: Brits abroad, behaving badly



DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Griptonite Games
Price
£29.99
Players
1
Genre
Action/Adventure
Supports
PS3 Link-up
Age Rating
16+
Website
www.ubi.com

After the rape of his homeland by English crusaders, Altair's out for blood (again) and so heads north to hunt the ascending Templars down. Luckily for him, even back then the Brits gravitated towards idyllic islands with bathwater sea, clement weather and reasonably priced booze, so Altair finds himself on the beautiful island of Cyprus.

As far as the plot is concerned, *Bloodlines* bridges the gap between *Assassin's Creed I* and *II*, but despite being set hundreds of miles across the Mediterranean from Altair's home town in Acre, this is every bit a chip off the old block: it's a lightweight *Assassin's Creed I*. The PSP hasn't got the resources to handle lengthy cut scenes that might have otherwise regularly punctuated *Bloodlines*, so Altair's goals are much more simple now.

Being a long way from home means he's unfettered by the politics of the guild and is free to execute his goal to rid the island of Templar scum and the threat to his homeland. The same flat-topped houses and the odd spire of a mosque or tower pepper the city, and we found ourselves free to explore with the same liberating



On the weekend, Templars and Assassins forget their differences and play hide and seek.

dexterity that we ran amok with in the *Holy Land*.

A context sensitive Right Shoulder button allows Altair to move and make use of any handhold to climb or to jump, grab and swing where appropriate. Combat is just as cinematic as the original game too, with Altair doing most of the work for you, leaving you free to block, strike or counter at will. Significantly, Cyprus is a far less populous place than you're used to, and while hitting the Blend button will usually get you out of trouble, you won't be knocking people over and attracting attention to yourself so often.

The Animus is far less intrusive, serving as little more than a HUD for most of the game, but it introduces the idea of upgrades. Templar tokens, similar to the

Combat is just as cinematic as the original game, with Altair doing most of the work for you

ones found in *Assassin's Creed*, can be used to buy more health or extra throwing knives, and when linked up to the PS3, these upgrades can be shared across the systems. It's an obvious gimmick, but we can't say we're not tempted by the idea ourselves.

Bloodline has some of the same problems *Assassin's Creed* suffered from: normal combat becomes blasé once Altair powers up, and guards have erratic responses to your presence, often sheathing their swords in plain sight of you if you dispatch their colleagues in a timely manner. But the patchwork of swan diving, epic boss battles and rooftop chases that characterises an *Assassin's Creed* game still hasn't lost its appeal, even on a handheld system.

Ben Biggs

VERDICT

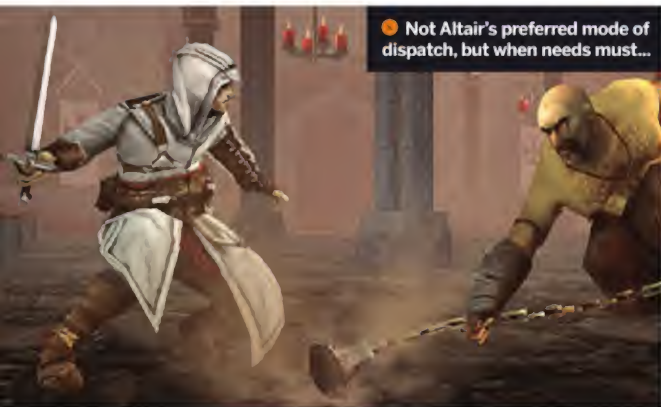
The opportunity to unlock more weapons in *Assassin's Creed 2* will prove tempting enough for some, but despite being leaner, *Bloodlines* stands up to scrutiny on its own merits. Fans will love it.

77%

A familiar sight for any *Assassin's Creed* fan: the swan dive.



Not Altair's preferred mode of dispatch, but when needs must...



Or you could try



Prince Of Persia Revelations Issue 174
Slow and frustrating. Sands Of Time seems so long ago... 69%

Continue

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Positions

Formation

Team Instructions

Player Instructions

Penalty Takers

Next Opposition

• Confirm

• Undo Changes

• You can tamper with formations easily, although the weak match engine means it's hard to monitor the effect.

Manchester United

16th in English Premier Division

Wed EVE
19 Aug 2009

Pos	Name	Pos
GK	van der Sar, E	GK
DL	Evra, P	D L
DR	Richards, M	D RC
DC	Brown, W	D RC
DC	Vidic, N	D C
ML	Silva, D	AM LC
MR	Young, A	AM/F RLC
MC	Hargreaves, O (c)	DM C
MC	Anderson	AM C
FC	Berbatov, D	S C
FC	Rooney, W	S C



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Football Manager Handheld 2010



Sports Interactive's reserve side gets a point deduction

Dennis Rodman and Carmen Electra, Britney and K-Fed... some pairs just don't marry well, and sadly it seems likely that this will forever be the case for the PSP and Sports Interactive's *Football Manager Handheld* series. It's hardly a surprise, though: *Football Manager* is, after all, a series designed with more powerful processing chips in mind, while the PSP has been made to cater for far less bulky titles. In short, it's not a pleasant common ground, and much less one we'd like to play football on.

The thrill of *Football Manager* is in its ability to convince the user that the frightening amount of cold, hard data crunching away in the background will accurately represent the most exciting and tumultuous sport in the world. The user's imagination has to play its part too, but as with a good novel, all the hard work is done for you. Take away a good portion of the data *Football Manager* uses to create its world of goals, debt, transfers and training,

however, and the user is left with a much less convincing representation, and by effect, a much less thrilling result. Or *Football Manager Handheld*, to give it another name.

The 2010 edition does offer improvements, but it's a question of whether a small set of tweaks can justify another investment in a series that's fundamentally flimsy. Can, for instance, the amendments to the Assistant Manager's role make up for the lack of matchday interaction? Can the introduction of player comparison menus atone for the largely unconvincing and almost totally domestic league-based transfer system? Can the improved match AI and slightly better 2D match presentation reconcile the unwelcome feeling brought

about by results that are just a bit *too* unpredictable? Can the bigger board presence amend the deficiencies in navigation, with Sports Interactive still reluctant to assign a mouse cursor to the analog stick? Not really.

Not the sort of game you get loads of enjoyment out of en route to work

The *Handheld* series has been done a small favour by the recent surge of mobile phone management sims, as by comparison it seems like a hugely in-depth game. But the inferior titles also underline a problem with Sega's *Handheld* series, which is to say that this isn't the sort of game you can get loads of enjoyment out of en route to work etc. *Football Manager* demands to be played in front of a stationary screen until some ungodly hour, the user poring over training stats and wage bills with unparalleled dedication. Ultimately, combined with the restrictions of the device, this is simply not something the PSP can offer.

Aaron Asadi

VERDICT

To call it an alternative to the brand's main title would be misleading. This is not a rewarding enough experience to bear any sort of favourable comparison.

60%

DETAILS

Publisher

Sega

Developer

Sports Interactive

Price

£29.99

Players

1

Genre

Sports

Supports

None

Age Rating

3+

Website

www.footballmanager.com

Continue

Aaron Asadi

Man Utd - Manager

Sat AM

15 Aug 2009

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Next Response

Headline	Date
Lincoln appoint Poole as manager	14 Aug AM
Man Utd favourites against Wigan	13 Aug AM
Wigan scout report	13 Aug AM
Northampton appoint Speed as manager	12 Aug AM

Wigan scout report

Your scout watched Wigan in their 2-1 defeat to Brighton.

Roberto Martinez likes to play a defensive style of football in a 4-5-1 formation.

It is believed that Wigan will be no pushovers in the forthcoming match.

• The interface is accessible enough, but it could be so much better if more use was made of the analog stick.

Continue

Manchester United

13th in English Premier Division

Sat PM

15 Aug 2009

Home

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Next Response

Pos	Name	Cond	Name	Cond
GK	van der Sar, E	94%	Rafael	100%
DL	Evra, P	87%	Foster, B	100%
DR	Richards, M	87%	Evans, J	100%
DC	Brown, W	88%	Fletcher, D	100%
DC	Vidic, N	87%	Valencia, A	100%
ML	Silva, D	81%	Rooney, W (45)	64%
MR	Young, A	82%	Fabio	100%
MC	Hargreaves, O (c)	86%		
MC	Anderson	87%		
FC	Berbatov, D	82%		
FC	Owen, M	100%		

• Confirm

• Undo Changes

• The interface is accessible enough, but it could be so much better if more use was made of the analog stick.



PSP

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Invizimals



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Novarama
Price
£34.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Beat-'em-up
Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi Multiplayer,
Infrastructure Wi-Fi
Mplayer, TV in/out, PSP
Camera (not PSPgo)
Age Rating
7
Website
<http://uk.playstation.com/games-media/games/detail/item156403/Invizimals%E2%84%A2/>

Fights, camera, action

Invizimals is an augmented reality title that plays like a cross between the ghost capturing bits in *Ghostbusters* movies and the creature battling sections in *Pokémon*. Using the camera that comes packed with the game, you scan your home for invisible creatures, trap them using something that looks like a tarot card and then evolve them by battling other Invizimals in the game or with friends.

There are over 100 different creatures to find and collect, and each one must be captured in a specific way. For instance, you might be asked to splat one with your hand like a fly, temporarily blind one by shining a beam of light into its poor retinas, or even help one that looks like a bear balancing on a beach ball circumvent some traffic cones.

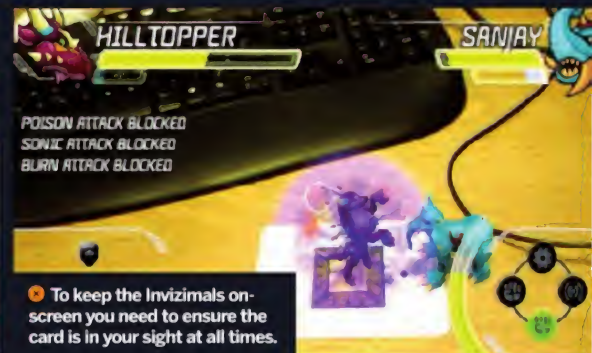
And there's a knack to finding them too; certain Invizimals only reveal themselves on specific coloured surfaces, and some at certain times in the game – so you might find yourself having to keep returning to Invizimal hot spots until they finally grace you with their presence. But this is a perfect opportunity to while away the wait with a spot of creature duelling instead, which makes up the other half of the game.



● We tried to provide proof of our epic Pot Noodle battle, but we're forbidden to take food and drink into the Grabbing Room.



● Failure to catch the Invizimal in the allotted time will see them escape.



● To keep the Invizimals on-screen you need to ensure the card is in your sight at all times.



● To aid you in fights, you can equip your Invizimal with three additional power upgrades.

The fights are played out in real time, and main attacks are carried out using the face buttons and through strategic depletion of your creature's stamina reserve – which slowly restores and is key to performing attacks. Unlike the capture element, fights can be played anywhere you can balance the card; meaning you can place it on top of your telly and have the creatures fight on David Dimbleby's head, or over a Pot Noodle to give the impression the creatures are fighting on a chicken and mushroom geyser (though we strongly advise you don't try this at home as it's both dangerous and stupid; we actually stumped up the money to do this is in a safe, controlled environment).

We actually had fun tapping into our inner child (which was easier than we thought) and messing around with *Invizimals*, although we did feel it lacked the charm and mass appeal of *Pokémon* titles. This is chiefly due to the game's humdrum story, which is played out through a series of FMV clips, the featureless World Map HUB that is used to navigate you

We actually had quite a bit of fun tapping into our inner child and messing around with Invizimals

to your next mission, and the game feeling more targeted at younger gamers. Our only other gripe, apart from the motion detection technology feeling a little unwieldy at times, was that failure in some later fights would destroy your creature – very frustrating when you'd spent a long time gradually powering them up. Overall though, we enjoyed the capture and combat mechanics, and feel the package holds together really well.

Stuart Hunt

VERDICT

It does have a few frustrating elements but *Invizimals* is nevertheless a quirky, engrossing and fun little portable offering. A great title for younger gamers, who are likely to lap this up like ketchup-flavoured dinosaurs.

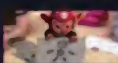
71%



● The story is played out via these FMV cut-scenes; cheesy, but they do a good job of explaining the basics.



Or you could try



EyePet Issue 185
It can be frustrating and might be quite short-lived, but *EyePet* is still totally absorbing, endearing and adorable. **83%**



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

● The two main characters in the game are called X1 and X2, with a combined charisma of none.

● Flying a snowspeeder is still cool, of course, even if the mechanics of doing so haven't changed in five years.

Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron

Remember those two Jedi clones in Star Wars, one good, one bad? Us neither

Now that four years have passed since the large-scale fan-service fest that was *Battlefront II*, we're ready for another big console sequel. Like 2007's *Renegade Squadron*, *Elite Squadron* is a portable spin-off that doesn't really know what to do with itself – capture the large-scale battles that the bestselling *Star Wars* spin-off is renowned for, or channel the alright-at-best third-person shooting into a structured action game. Well, both methods were employed on *Renegade Squadron*, but neither move too far outside the realms of mediocrity.

One of the big draws of the leaked footage of *Battlefront III* was the ability to move between

land, air and space seamlessly, a feat so ambitious that attempting it on a handheld would be balls-out crazy. So, Rebellion didn't bother. Instead, short loading sequences have to occur whenever you move between each environment. Frankly, we prefer *Battlefront II*'s big, seamless worlds rather than dealing with constant pausing that derails the feeling of being in a coherent *Star Wars* battle.

Couple this to a lousy story, and the remaining merit lies in the fact that *Battlefront*'s sense of freedom in choosing soldier classes, vehicles and places to go still provides more thrills than comparable PSP third-person games. The series ain't stale



● If nothing else, Infrastructure multiplayer could take off and extend the life span of the game.

yet – but we'll need better than adequate sustenance to get us through next time. Oh, and as is customary with every third-person shooter on the PSP, the controls are rubbish.

Samuel Roberts

VERDICT

Elite Squadron isn't as well-constructed as the PSP version of *Battlefront II*, and that came out in 2005! A poor story and the transition gimmick mean that Pandemic's efforts are still king.

65%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues

Little Big Indy

The Adventure Continues? More like 'The Same Adventure You Played Last Year Only With A Few New Levels And A Couple Of Extra Features'. That's what we'd have been inclined to call it. Which

We doubt it will spark the same sort of phenomenal creations as LittleBigPlanet

is probably why we don't make videogames. Except, of course, in this not-really-a-sequel sequel we do make the videogame.

The biggest, most significant addition to *Lego Indy* is the level creator, which lets you create your own characters, levels and complete adventures brick by brick. Powered by the limitless potential of Lego, the editor allows you to create an infinite number of your own designs with ease. And while we

doubt it will spark the same sort of phenomenal creations as *LittleBigPlanet*, it does at least expand the life span of the game and offers



● Indy's whip has all sorts of uses. Some practical, others played for laughs.

valuable insight into the working process of the real game designers at Traveller's Tales.

The UK-based developer has made quite a few Lego games now and they're all starting to feel a bit samey... And not just because this one features many of the same levels again. All of the new content just feels so overly familiar. The story may be different but it's the same run, jump and collect formula and is, frankly, a little old and tired. A bit like Indiana Jones himself.

Ashley Day

VERDICT

There's quite a bit of new content here but, if you've played the original it may just feel like more of the same. With the level editor, however, you can at least try to make something more fun.

71%



● The Lego games have always made for great multiplayer adventures. Little technical tricks like the dynamic split-screen certainly help.



● The in-game locations have just as much attention to detail as ever and are packed with secrets to discover.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja 5

The past is orange

Just when you thought the PS2 was dead, another *Naruto* game comes along and you're glad you have a backwards-compatible PS3 because you've got no idea where you last saw your PS2. Glad, that is, until you put it on and remember what *Naruto: Ultimate Ninja* games are like. They're shallow, stupid,

repetitive and boring with but one saving grace – they're really good to look at. Not on an HDTV mind you. On one of those bad boys they look jaggy and horrible, but on a standard-def set there's a soft focus effect that turns the zigzags into straight lines and *Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja 5* looks much like a playable cartoon adventure.

The various special moves are pretty entertaining to watch at first – you can even now perform double-team specials, which is this episode's main selling point – but once you've seen them once or twice they get boring, just like everything else in the game.

'Exploration' involves trudging from A to B, avoiding enemies because there seems to be no point in fighting them and avoiding traps because they're traps. Every now and

again you throw a shuriken at a box and receive something that also seems to have no point. Nothing has any point because the fights you have against non-character enemies are rubbish button-bashing brawls that last an average of about nine seconds. Strictly for hardcore *Naruto* fans only.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

It's faithful to the anime both in appearance and story, but it's not faithful to principles of good game design in any real way. Only the one-on-one battles are any fun, but even then only in a very shallow way.

59%

DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
CyberConnect2
Price
£19.99
Players
1-2
Genre
RPG/Beat-'Em-Up
Supports
Widescreen,
Progressive Scan
Age Rating
12+
Website
<http://naruto.namcobandagames.com>



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Agarest: Generations Of War

Generations of boobs, more like...

Anyone hoping for beautifully rendered lands of fantasy – as is par for the course in the genre – is going to be disappointed with *Agarest*. The game is far too retro to fuss over cutting-edge visuals, or untried gameplay.

Your characters, who all speak in Japanese with subtitles, journey across the world map

from one predetermined point to the next. At each location, you'll either have to battle or mooch around a settlement in which talking to the rest of your party and other NPCs will advance the story. There's also a degree of impetus to pester the lady characters for sexual favours – and breed new heroes – but even though the game is dripping with



sexually suggestive imagery, don't expect it to corrupt; it is 12-rated for good reason.

The battle system is what wins the day; it's hugely compelling, operating around a simple grid-based move, face direction, attack mechanic, then adding layer upon layer of complexity. Combining certain characters' abilities has added effect and the further into the game you go, the more impressive these become. The battles are hugely enjoyable and challenging, and despite its traditionalism, *Agarest* will keep fans coming back for more.

Dan Howdle

VERDICT

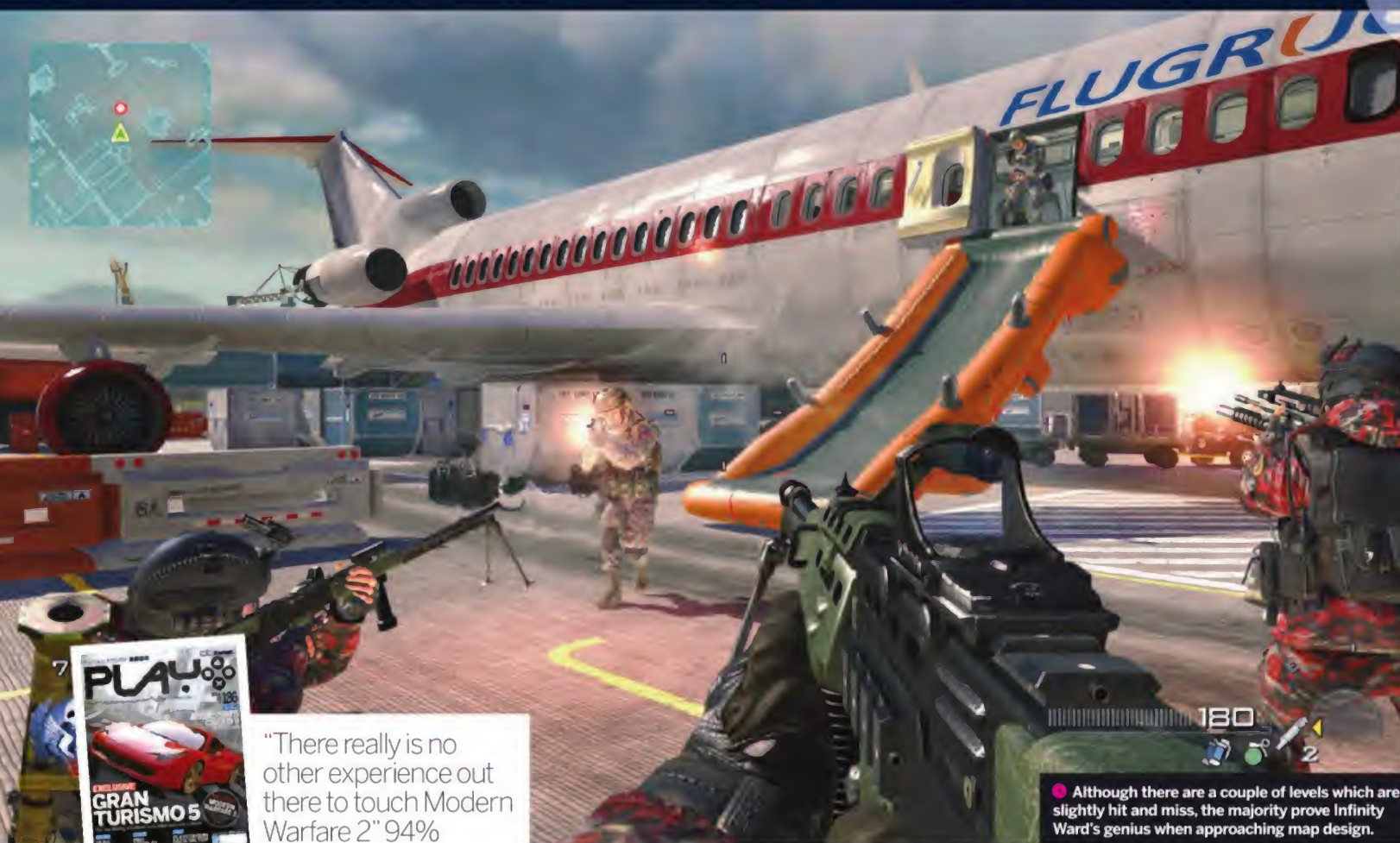
If your game-love is visually dependent, you may wish to look elsewhere, but JRPG fans who are graphically agnostic will find plenty here as well as a rewarding, albeit punishing challenge.

78%



DETAILS

Publisher
Ghostlight
Developer
Compile Heart
Price
£34.99
Players
1
Genre
RPG
Supports
720p
Age Rating
12+
Website
www.ghostlight.uk.com



"There really is no other experience out there to touch Modern Warfare 2" 94%

Although there are a couple of levels which are slightly hit and miss, the majority prove Infinity Ward's genius when approaching map design.

Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

The world's biggest multiplayer game has arrived

DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Infinity Ward
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£54.99
Players
2-18
Genre
First-person shooter
Supports
720p, Sixaxis,
DualShock 3, Dolby
Digital 5.1

For some, *Modern Warfare 2* is a multiplayer vehicle. Forget the single-player merely 'tacked-on' for those not smart enough to venture online, they say, the latest iteration of *Call Of Duty* is at its finest when competed over the PlayStation Network. Considering how well-structured Infinity Ward's latest is, this argument sounds like a valid one to us.

As anyone with half an interest in it knows, the sixth *COD*'s multiplayer setup is a greatly enhanced version of the one that came packed with *Call Of Duty 4*. Spurred on by attempting to increase your rank, every small step you make is greeted with an offering of new perks, weapons and skills. Unlike before, though, the challenge this time is far more intense.

A problem some threw at the model when it first reared its head was how it favoured those who had played it the most – anyone with the talent or inclination to shoot away for hours on end usually had the upper hand. This

idea is much more apparent now. When you first sit down with *Modern Warfare 2* it's not uncommon to come away feeling particularly frustrated as the repetitive 'spawn/die' cycle grinds away. Before long, you may even start questioning whether or not this is the game for you, your online stats are that bad. And then you surpass level 10. Although such a landmark doesn't turn the experience on its head, it is here where proceedings begin to make sense. With a wider choice of guns, perks and equipment at your fingertips, you can start to craft the loadout that suits your play style. As you soldier on, all the tiny elements that Infinity Ward has masterfully constructed start to make themselves known. Better still, you'll begin to understand how to conquer them.

Aside from tweaking the foundations, however, the brains behind the world's most successful videogame launch ever have also

added in a few inspired new strokes, namely the ability to control and customise your killstreaks. Rather than offer the same rewards to each player, as you progress more of these fabled powers will become available. You'll still need to string kills together to unlock them but knowing your decisions are exclusive to you makes them all the more sweet to unleash.

Modern Warfare 2 is easily one of the finest multiplayer shooters to exist

Pushing the same idea, you can also choose a 'deathstreak'. Given to individuals who find themselves breathing their last breath far too often, it's the developer's attempt to even out the playing field. Although it works to a certain degree, the move doesn't tip the balance very far in the favour of the weak. The four available aren't hugely beneficial, meaning those who are truly terrible will find little comfort.

online reviews

ミナル

それはどのようによかったか。



Although this screenshot seems to suggest otherwise, the majority of players you'll try to team with will often be out for their own means.



Personalising your loadout is key and can often be the reason you start to be successful.

Even so, *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* is easily one of the finest multiplayer shooters ever created, boasting an addictive quality so strong that it's horrendously difficult to try to drag yourself away from it. With a booming community and an arrangement aimed to hook you in the more you play, this is pure gaming gold. You'd be absolutely crazy to ignore it.

Simon Miller

VERDICT

The best multiplayer shooter on the PlayStation 3 and one that keeps on giving for an absolutely incredible amount of time. Anyone who enjoys venturing online should involve themselves as soon as humanly possible. *Modern Warfare 2* is a simply unstoppable experience.

★★★★★

MAKE YOUR MARK

Stamp your authority on the PSN

DESPITE ITS SERIOUS nature, *Modern Warfare 2* knows how to have fun. One of the many additions this sequel has received comes in the form of emblems and titles. Opening up the option to give yourself a ridiculous name along with an inappropriate picture is oddly charming and, as with all things *Call Of Duty*, you have to earn the right to unlock them all. Ultimately, it gives you an idea of what kind of player you're about to compete against. Instead of just sitting in a lobby waiting for the match to start, you can take a quick peek at your upcoming enemies to see if their chosen name gives anything about them away. You may be surprised to find you can identify the snipers in the group long before they pop you in the head from a country mile away. Unfortunately, it doesn't make it any less annoying...

PSN Roundup

DJ HERO

Nothing but bare bones...

Publisher: Activision Developer: FreeStyleGames Price: £99.99 Players: 1-2 Genre: Rhythm Action

If you look back through the canon of *Guitar Hero* games, it took a while before the multiplayer came into its own. The act of two friends, or competitors, over the PSN, strapping on two plastic guitars and 'rocking off' against each other was so compelling, there wasn't much need for any gimmicky extra modes. Luckily, due to the core experience, the rhythm-action title of choice was largely forgiven; it was too fun not to. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for *DJ Hero*.

At its heart, FreeStyleGames' take on the genre is a single-player jaunt. Yes, with a room full of people it can be exceptionally social and entertaining but it harks back to the days when



passing the controller around was the way to play – competing against someone else while trying to get the highest score lacks any real sense of joy. It's a nice way to spice up your approach to *DJ Hero* if you're finding it a little stagnant, but don't expect it to completely reignite the passion. SM

★★★★★

BORDERLANDS

Co-op has never been so addictive

Publisher: 2K Games Developer: Gearbox Software Price: £49.99 Players: 1-4 Genre: First-person shooter/RPG

If you've been playing *Borderlands* by yourself, you may be slightly confused as to what the fuss is all about. Wandering around Pandora on your lonesome, looting items and killing all manner of creatures while trying to work out where the real longevity or amusement lies. In short, it awaits online.

Built with co-op in mind, Gearbox's shooter/RPG comes into its own when you and three friends start exploring the wastelands. The highlight comes in the form of pillaging. Without colleagues, the fun lies in comparing your latest item to what you currently have. Throw more players in and it becomes a competition in who can get their hands on it first. On top of this, *Borderlands* skews the enemies and challenge depending on how many people are in your



party. You won't understand the game's genius until you expand your group.

Easily one of the finest co-operative titles currently on the PS3. SM

★★★★★

FAIRYTALE FIGHTS

No better online than it is off

Publisher: Playlogic Developer: Playlogic Price: £29.99 Players: 1-4 Genre: Hack-'n'-Slash

As we now know, the concept of *Fairytale Fights* is more interesting than actually playing it. Niggling camera issues and repetitive gameplay means tedium kicks in far sooner than you'd like. With this in mind, surely the best way to counter it is with online multiplayer? Not quite...

As is blindingly obvious from the outset, *Fairytale Fights* is designed for drop-in/drop-out co-op. Slicing and dicing your way through fictional foes and laughing about the incredible amount of gore in a cartoon setting just makes far more sense with friends. However, the offline problems still rear their head far too soon. Playlogic's hack-'n'-slasher just isn't varied enough to sustain long periods of play, meaning even with more people it becomes exceptionally boring. It could be argued it's not even worth



going through the process at all. There is the option to fight it out in the arena but again, there isn't any substance to see it through. Mediocre at best. SM

★★★★★



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Q-Games
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£7.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Shoot-'Em-Up

PixelJunk Shooter

GAME



Junk it most certainly is not

Skilfully mixing puzzle and exploration elements with good old-fashioned shooting, *PixelJunk Shooter* is a delicious blending of genres that builds on Q-Games' tradition of taking an existing formula and adding a unique spin to it.

Initially you'd be forgiven for thinking that *PixelJunk Shooter* is yet another variation on *Thrust*, as seen with this month's *Gravity Crash*. After all, there are stranded men to rescue, huge caverns to explore and dangerous objects to skilfully avoid or shoot. Extended play, however, reveals that while it's far shorter than Just Add Water's impressive effort, it's instantly more accessible and is in fact a world away from the 8-bit greatness that is *Thrust*.

In the simplest of terms *PixelJunk Shooter* requires you to do nothing more than head deep underground and rescue a set amount of miners scattered around each stage. Before long, however, you realise that you'll only rescue every miner

by carefully manipulating the surrounding environment. Lava and pools of water are littered throughout each stage, and form a new, easily shootable substance should they come into contact with each other. Early stages require you to cleverly combine these elements in order to make progress, but as you advance you'll encounter ice, gas and oil, all of which will cause your brain to go into overload as you work out the best way to save your trapped miners.

As with the rest of Q-Games' series, *PixelJunk Shooter*'s visuals are fairly basic to look at and are nowhere near as impressive as other PlayStation Network titles like *Trine* and *WipEout HD*. This actually works in *Shooter*'s favour, however, as it gives it a distinctive look that, while not quite as stylish as the excellent vector work seen in *Gravity Crash*, still makes it stand out from many other games on the service.

For all its razor-sharp visuals and trippy audio, it's in the gameplay where *Shooter* truly excels and Q-Games has added all sorts of clever tricks to ensure that you're constantly dragged back for more. A variety of different ships are available to use throughout the game that allow you to do everything from

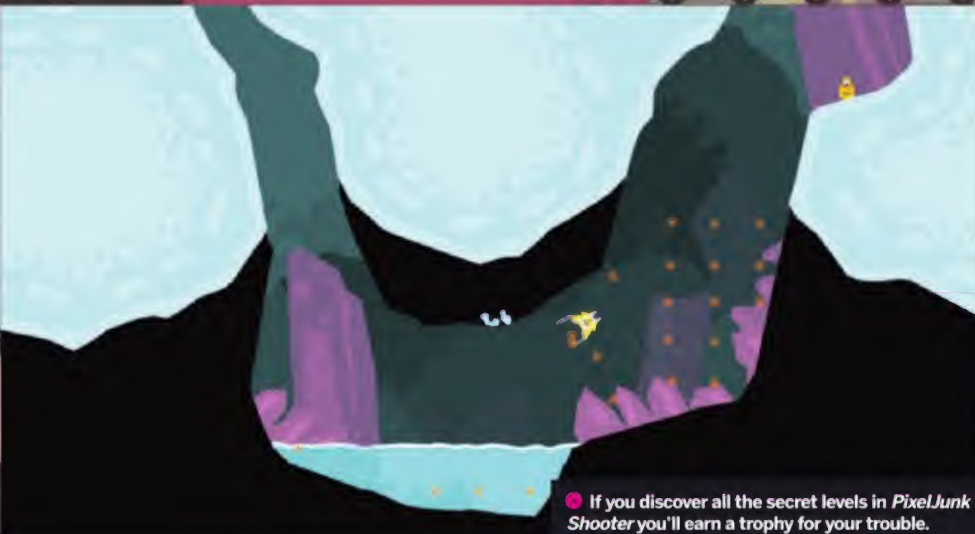
Q-Games has added all sorts of clever tricks to ensure that you're constantly dragged back for more

spewing forth huge jets of magma and water to changing the resistance of your craft so it can safely explore lava. Certain ships allow you to use your hook to pull away huge bits of debris that would otherwise block your path, while pushing both analogue sticks in the same direction will give you a quick burst of speed (there's no need to worry about inertia here). You can even spin your ship to get through certain substances.

Store Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

Store Roundup



If you discover all the secret levels in *PixelJunk Shooter* you'll earn a trophy for your trouble.



Gas is highly flammable when mixed with lava. Be sure to get out of the way when this happens.

Q-Games has begged, stolen and borrowed to create *PixelJunk Shooter*, but the company has also added its own distinctive stamp. The end result is a highly refreshing shooter that's only really let down by its short playing time and lack of any sort of online mode. We still love it, though.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

A clever and inventive take on the shoot-'em-up genre that proves that Q-Games and its *PixelJunk* series remain among the most exciting things on Sony's online service. Don't miss this.

93%

BOSS BATTLES

Big, bad, but beautiful

NO SHOOT-'EM-UP WOULD be complete without a huge boss to defeat and *PixelJunk Shooter* is no different. You'll often be required to employ the skills you've learnt throughout the level in order to best defeat them and most require brains, rather than simple shooting skills, which in itself is a nice refreshing change. Seeing that *Shooter* is quite a short game to complete, we won't reveal all the bosses here, but we will say that even the first you face, a giant crab, has quite a few varied attack patterns you'll need to learn before you can send him to meet his maker.

HEAVY WEAPON GAME

Shoot, shoot and shoot again

Publisher PopCap Games Developer In-House Release Date Out Now Price £7.99 Players 1-4 Genre Arcade

POPCAP GAMES CERTAINLY knows the casual game market. While its prices are often pretty steep – especially when compared to the same games it releases on Xbox 360's Live Arcade – there's no denying that the company's games are extremely well made. *Heavy Weapon* is another solid example and is a ridiculously hectic shooter set over 19 increasingly difficult levels. A twin-stick shooter at heart, you do nothing more than trundle across the ground in your tank and take down increasing waves of enemy planes. Yes, it's simple but it's also a hell of a lot of fun, more so if you can track down three other players online. It's just the wrong side of £5.



75%

FALLOUT 3 MOTHERSHIP ZETA/POINT LOOKOUT DLC

Bethesda scores a swing and a miss

Publisher Bethesda Developer Bethesda Game Studios Release Date Out Now Price £7.99 each Players 1 Genre RPG

PLAYING THROUGH THE last two pieces of DLC for Bethesda's *Fallout 3* is



a bittersweet experience. *Point Lookout* is arguably the series' best addition since *Broken Steel* and offers entertaining missions, a huge area to explore and plenty of foes to battle. *Mothership Zeta*, though, is a real waste of time, offering dull missions, virtually no exploring and uninspiring and unintelligent enemies. In short it's not worth the £8 asking price. Just stick with *Broken Steel* and *Point Lookout* and pretend all the other DLC doesn't exist.

Point Lookout ★★★★★
Mothership Zeta ★★★★★

METAL GEAR SOLID GAME

Sneak, sneak and sneak again

Publisher Konami Developer In-House Release Date Out Now Price £7.99 Players 1 Genre Adventure

KONAMI HAS TAKEN its sweet time, but Snake's first PlayStation adventure is now available on PlayStation 3. While it obviously looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise and is far more entertaining and structured than the incoherent mess that was *Sons Of Liberty*. It may borrow heavily from Snake's previous NES adventures but *Metal Gear Solid* remains one of the PlayStation's best games and is a must-have addition to any PS3 owner's library. The fact that this groundbreaking game is available for just £8 makes it even more of a bargain. Simply essential.



93%

GRAVITY CRASH GAME

Talk about bad timing

Publisher SCEE Developer Just Add Water Release Date Out Now Price £6.29 Players 1-2 Genre Shoot-'Em-Up

NOW THIS IS refreshingly old-school. While Just Add Water's new shooter looks incredibly similar to *PixelJunk Shooter*, it's actually a far different game that deserves your attention. Essentially a reboot of the cult 8-bit game *Thrust*, it has you exploring huge environments, while tackling the gravity of each world and seeking out artefacts that will open up the next, even larger stage. While it's not as accessible as *PixelJunk* – the controls themselves take an age to successfully master – *Gravity Crash* remains an excellent shooter that's enhanced by a superb and easy-to-use level editor. Only its insane difficulty level lets it down.



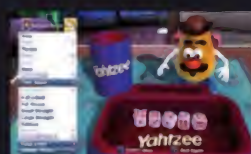
85%

HASBRO FAMILY GAME NIGHT DLC

For REAL board game fans

Publisher Electronic Arts Developer EA Bright Light Release Date Out Now Price £29.99 Players 1-4 Genre Family

THIS IS A strange move by EA. Boggle, Battleships, Yahtzee!, Sorry!, Sliders and Connect 4 were all available separately on Live Arcade, but EA has lumped them all together on PSN for just under £30. The good news is that if you love board games then the selection is pretty decent. Better yet, they support online play and feature both traditional and surprisingly decent alternative modes, meaning longevity is assured. Ultimately, though, unless you're mad about board games the insane price is simply too off-putting.



60%

BRÜTAL LEGEND: TEARS OF THE HEXTADON DLC

There'll be tears all right. Yours

Publisher Electronic Arts Developer Double Fine Release Date Out Now Price £3.99 Players 2-8 Genre Adventure/RTS

IF YOU WERE lucky enough to pick this up for free, then well done, you've got a pretty good deal. Everyone else is going to have to decide if the two fairly decent maps that are on offer are worth the £4 asking price, especially as all you're buying is an activation code to access content that's already on the game you've got (unless Double Fine and EA have found a way to cram two huge online levels into 100kb). Yes, the levels are decent, but stuff like this annoys us. Save your money and buy *PixelJunk Shooter* instead.



★★★★★



The LittleBigPlanet-arium

President Obama says that LittleBigPlanet can be used as an educational tool, and we totally agree that it's a great way to get started in engineering and electronics. Plus, these eight levels will give you an education in fun



Want us to feature your LittleBigPlanet level? Email us at: play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with a name, description and tell us why!

LEVELS OF THE MONTH



POST-APOCALYPTIC CREATOR: anpostteller

THIS IS A pretty straightforward shoot-'em-up-type level that manages to distinguish itself with some great explosions and collapsing scenery. Tense, atmospheric and slightly *Fallout*-esque.



MAXED OUT CREATOR: Qugz

THIS LEVEL IS pretty minimal in the visual flair department and lacks any kind of atmosphere, but this is more than compensated for by a series of devices that make use of *LBP*'s physics in unique and fun ways.



TRIBAL RUINS CREATOR: jackofcourse

THERE ARE AN awful lot of these *Indiana Jones*-type adventure levels, but this is definitely one of the best. The presentation is extremely slick and there are some very good puzzles along the way, too.



MOVING PARTS CREATOR: gordy2007

ANOTHER LEVEL THAT uses physics superbly, the bulk of Moving Parts takes place in a fully rotating world. It's genius how it fits together, although we got the impression gordy2007 didn't know how to end it.



DIGITIZED REALITY: THE LAB CREATOR: steve-big-guns

SOME SECTIONS OF this level are a bit tricky and a bit drawn-out, but this is easy to forgive when the creative side of it is so well done. It goes from cartoon-ish to surreal to existential in just 20 minutes.



DRAGON MASTER CREATOR: jonopus

THIS LEVEL HAS a brilliant old-world art style to it, which lends it a dark fantasy atmosphere, and there are some decent mechanics at work, too. Plus Sackboy gets to ride a dragon, which is always a bonus.



WIPEOUT XS2 SILVERSTREAM CREATOR: Mr_Monki_HUN

GAMEPLAY-WISE THERE'S not much to this level – you just choose a craft then hold R1 down to drive it – but the attention to detail makes it an absolute must for fans of the classic PlayStation space racer.



LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE IN THE FORBIDDEN 3D WORLD OF THE PUMPKINS CREATOR: Pirmaut

A LONG NAME for a long level. It's too drawn-out in places, but it looks great, with a spooky Halloween art style and clever 3D depth effect.

HOME ROUNDUP

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Your monthly roundup of events and happenings on PlayStation Home

THE HOTTEST MUSIC venue in Europe right now is not the O2 Arena or Wembley Stadium and it's certainly not Brixton Academy either. PlayStation's Home is now the place to be if you want to hear live music it seems, as Groove Armada recently followed in the footsteps of Dizzee Rascal by holding an exclusive concert within PlayStation Home to celebrate the launch of their new album *Blacklight*. The concert took place on 3 December and was very well attended. If you missed it, no matter as the new album is out in February 2010 for you to enjoy.

In the meantime there are plenty of new places to visit, items to buy and promotions to join. By now you should be enjoying some *Assassin's Creed II* outfits based on main character Ezio designed for both men and women. Much like



● Namco loves Home as this arcade proves.



● If you see someone in these animated shirts, honour them.



● After Dizzee Rascal, Groove Armada also came to Home.



How To Build... Coal Effect Fire

By SuperMassiveGav

Brrrr! Despite being made of warm, woolly fabric, Sackboy is freezing his fuzzy little tits off in this weather. What he needs is an adjustable coal effect fire



1 Stick a glass rod to a glass block then make a flat stone rectangle a little taller than Sackboy and cut a horizontal slot in it a little wider than the glass rod.



2 Place the stone block over the rod so that the rod fits through the slot. Stick a sponge circle on the end of the rod then make the block thicker. You now have a sliding lever.



3 Put a flat stone rectangle behind and blacken it, then make a stone platform three blocks deep and stick it to the lever block and the backing.



4 Place two emitters onto the stone platform. Once that's done place two magnetic keys of different colours onto the sponge lever handle.



5 Place a magnetic key switch of one colour half way along the slot with a radius covering the right-hand half of the slot. Connect it to the first emitter.



6 Place a magnetic key switch of the other colour at the right-hand end with a radius covering the right-hand quarter of the slot. Connect it to the second emitter.



7 Make a shape like this using stone squares and hexagons, then make a similar one of about twice the height but the same width. Make them fiery then capture them.



8 Make the first emitter emit the low firey shape onto the centre of the platform, and make the second emitter emit the high firey shape behind the low one. Use settings shown.



9 Make a stone square two blocks deep with an arch cut into it the same width as your firey shapes. Put a wooden mantel on top then stick it on top of the stone platform.



MySoti.com shirts are added regularly. Keep an eye out.



His and hers Ezio threads should be with you.

▶ the game itself, these outfits are very finely detailed and well put together. Perhaps some of the best game costumes we've seen on Home actually. However, if you don't want such a drastic makeover you can pick up some of the new shirts from our friends over at MySoti.com from the store. New designs are added on a regular basis.

Which only leaves the new spaces and events to talk about. To kick things off one of our big cover games of the year, *Tekken 6*, opened its space up on Home recently with lots of arcade machines and a little training area to give your avatar a good workout. Namco Bandai once again giving lots of support to the service. We would expect some big *Tekken* events to hit sometime in the near future so keep an eye out for that. One event you may have missed though is the PSPgo: Team Trial event at the Presentation Podium. Teams of four had to collectively complete a series of actions and challenges with those completing the task receiving a very fancy, animated PSPgo shirt.

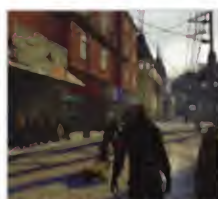
If you don't want to miss out on these sorts of things in the future then you better get yourself on Home a little more often. It's where things are happening these days.

Including: Ten Of The Best... Dystopias /// The Play Quiz /// Guilty Pleasures

Ten of the best...

...Dystopias

Dystopias, anti-utopias, caco-utopias: basically we mean 'places which are really messed up'. Technically then, this should be a Ten of the Worst, but we can't help loving these bad boys



City 17 Half Life 2

A hauntingly beautiful city filled with terrified inhabitants and under the iron rule of an oppressive regime, City 17 ticks all the dystopia boxes with gusto. The personality of the city helps make the game what it is, and without it *Half Life 2* might have floundered somewhat.



Washington DC Fallout 3

It's easy to go straight to the fact that this is a post-apocalyptic wasteland, full of marauding raiders and murderous mutants, but that would be ignoring the history of *Fallout*'s world. The vaults are social experiments, nuclear war was expected and people were systematically chosen to survive or not. Chilling.



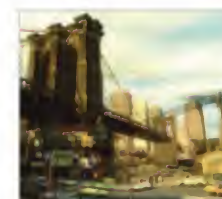
The World Syndicate Wars

As head of Eurocorp it was your job to quell dissent, halt uprisings and kill anyone who had any thought of letting the citizens of the world think for themselves or disabling their utopia chips, implanted in their brains. Wonderfully, not only was it a dystopia: it was *your* dystopia.



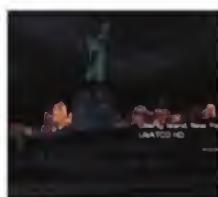
Midgar Final Fantasy VII

A literal divide between the rich and poor saw Midgar's less fortunate citizens living under giant metal plates in slums, while the toff brigade were privy to benefits like *the sky*. The fact that many poor died, crushed by a falling plate, is the icing on a particularly dystopian cake.



Liberty City Grand Theft Auto

It would be easy to pick any of *Grand Theft Auto*'s cities for inclusion, but the original is still the best, as shown in the latest and greatest of Rockstar's violent epics. Crime is endemic, the police are laughable and the city is controlled by the monied few. It's real life, basically.



The World (again) Deus Ex

Deus Ex's prophetic sight of a New York skyline without the twin towers on its release in 1999 may only have been a coincidence, but how long until corporations, governments and black ops units control the world in its entirety? They already do, according to some. But they're mental people.



Mars
Red Faction/RF: Guerrilla
So yes it may be a direct rip-off of *Total Recall* in almost every way, but the point stands and is one that has been keeping us up at night: when mining operations finally do open up on Mars, we're not going to rush to apply... Especially not if Michael Ironside is going to be there.



The City
Mirror's Edge
We're not actually sure what the city is called – Ubiquitous or Mirror City popped up on a quick search – but the fact remains that this is one clean, shiny dystopia. Where once there was life, it is no more, and people have reverted to physical communication to avoid invasive surveillance.



Rapture
BioShock
One man's utopian vision that fell apart in the hands of the greedy, the stupid and the selfish, Rapture had us... enraptured from the very moment we first set eyes on it. While *Mirror's Edge* has the cleanliness, *BioShock* trumps it with the real 'wow' factor. Along with the Big Daddies, of course.



Hillys
Beyond Good & Evil
It looks idyllic, but Hillys is very much a world under threat. While it may initially look like the Alpha Sector are there to help, it soon becomes clear that they are nothing more than the cogs of a military dictatorship, and hellbent on keeping the populace in line. Lovely stuff.

gAMe unDeR Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...

Let's see what 2010 brings us...



First we have 3D Bubble Technology, ideal for hypnotising cats.

Later in the year we will be introduced to Activision's latest franchise:



Violin Hero

This will swiftly – and obviously – be followed by:



Baby Hero

And of course, the year will finish with the fantastic-looking:



Queen Amidala Hero

It's the PlayStation quiz so hard that even the Play team can't do it, and they made it in the first place. Good luck, you'll need it...

Let's get quizzical!

Dogs are great. We love dogs. They're better than people in many ways, plus they always have your back in games. Unless they're evil. But which games are these dogs from?



Dogs are the literal, exact, polar opposite of cats. Which means these questions have at least a very tenuous link to the evil feline race:

- 5) Cait Sith: Who did he actually work for in *Final Fantasy VII*?
- 6) Toro: He features in the best golf game on PS3 – which is what?
- 7) Aslan: Who is the little goat bastard in the *Chronicles of Narnia*?

- 8) Catwoman: Who, quite famously, received a Razzie for her portrayal of the lead role in the film?

- 9) Felicia: What fighting game is she from, in which she could battle a vampire popular with fan-artists?

- 10) Constable Neyla: What do *Sly Raccoon* and *Nathan Drake*'s sequels have in common?

Strangely, we've decided the opposite of cats is cars. As such, we'll have some car-related questions now:

- 11) KITT's nemesis was KARR, and *Knight Rider* had a game on PS2 so this all fits nicely. What does KARR stand for?
- 12) What is the car on the front cover of *Dirt 2*?
- 13) In which game can you drive the Hunter Vegas Carnivale?
- 14) What evil, cantankerous thing demands you do certain things in *OutRun Online Arcade*?
- 15) Which normally excellent series messed up with 3, 4 and *Small Brawl*, before returning to form with *Black and Head On*?

Gareth Barry is a robot, which is another form of machine, meaning we can now seamlessly link cars to football and have some footie-related questions:

- 16) Which PSOne title featured the Predator Kick, which would knock keepers into the back of the goal?



- 17) They most recently made *EyePet*, but they also made *This is Football*. Who are they?
- 18) Who was the commentator on *Striker '96*?
- 19) How many memory card blocks did *Premier Manager '98* use for a save game?

- 20) Now, to bring things abruptly into the present: who did motion capture for *PES 2010*?



So how did you do in our world-famous Play quiz? To those of you who cheated, we've been watching you, and we're not impressed.

Answers on page 95

CULT HEROES

A look back at a bygone age when men were men and games were art. Possibly



Freedom Fighters

Celebrating the all-conquering power of a flag

Format: PS2 Released: 2003
Reviewed: 107 Score: 92%

THE COMMIES HAVE invaded the US, many have been killed and it's up to you and your merry band of insurg... 'freedom fighters' to repel the invading Ruskies and save the world as America always does. And there we have 2003's *Freedom Fighters*, from the same studio that brought us *Hitman 2* and *Kane and Lynch*. Wait a minute – that can't be right, surely? But of course it is – we just forgot to mention that the game is filled with some biting (though clumsy) satire on US foreign policy and how the country as a whole sees itself on the world stage.

You complete a level by hoisting the Stars and Stripes above a building: Old Glory (and flags in general) defeats all. The USSR dropped the first nuke and became the biggest superpower in lieu of the Yanks, forcing their anti-capitalist will on the world and 'liberating' any country they thought wasn't up to scratch: well, you see where the parallels are coming from. Basically, *Freedom Fighters* showed us an attack on the US itself – both literally and figuratively – and we were richer for having played it. Those of us who bothered, that is.

Oh, there's a game in there too and it's very good. Simplicity is key, squads are commanded with ease and accuracy, and it all comes to a satisfying climax. But it's the story behind the game that proves to be the most interesting aspect. It wasn't satire pushed to the limits of satire itself, but it was refreshing to see an aspect like that included in – of all things – a videogame. Obviously though, it tanked when it came to sales despite massive praise from numerous publications, so the likelihood of ever seeing a sequel is slim to none.

£3-5 will net you a copy, but it won't help revive a sequel. You philistines.

Bayonetta

EAGER TO GET THOSE SHINY PLATINUM AWARDS BUT KEEP ENDING UP WITH BRONZE? THIS HANDY MINI-GUIDE HAS THE TIPS TO HELP YOU OUT...

Details

Publisher Sega **Developer** Platinum Games **Price** £53.99 **Players** 1 **Genre** Action Adventure **Age Rating** 18+ **Website** www.sega.com/platinumgames/bayonetta

BE QUICK

One of the most important factors of a good score is the speed in which you complete a section. This doesn't count during exploration so feel free to keep an eye out for various collectables during then, but when the verse number in the top changes – be prepared. Use that as a cue to attack and charge in for the kill. Do remember though: less haste, more speed. While rushing in might be quicker, it also means you're likely to get killed more. Be vigilant and methodical rather than fast. Notice what you're fighting and think of the best way to kill it quickly, since getting yourself hit will only hinder your speed.



USE COMBOS

There are two reasons to make use of combos. By keeping a combo going you'll increase your final score, but also by using combos you'll be able to unleash powerful finishing moves which means the enemy will die quicker.

To keep a combo going you need to keep fighting and avoid taking hits. You'll be allowed to take brief moments to direct your attack or begin another combo, but leave it too long and the meter at the top right will reset. If you need to close some distance between you and your enemy, rather than rushing them hold **△**/**×** to keep firing at them. The bullet damage won't do much to your enemy or your score, but it'll keep the counter running until you can get closer for a more devastating attack.

During an attack, if you notice another enemy approaching and about to attack, tap **R2**/**R2** to dodge. This is important since a successful attack on you will end your combo, cause you damage and open you up for more attacks.



USE ITEMS

While items don't directly affect your score, there are a number of items you can use that will improve or aid you in some way. There are a lot of items you can buy from Rodin in the Gates of Hell that will help you out in battle, but many of the simpler ones you can concoct yourself will provide you with just as much benefit.

Some of the lollipops you can make will give you a bonus to damage, helping you defeat the enemy quickly, while others cast a shield on you that means you can avoid damage altogether. Using green lollipops will restore health, but use these outside of battle since having more health simply means having more health to be taken away – it's better to die and retry than to restore health and lose a ton of points.

Keep an eye out for collectables too, since these will help you by providing permanent upgrades. Collect Witch's Hearts to gain more health, Moon Pearls for more magic and Angelic Hymns LP's to unlock more weaponry.



AVOID DAMAGE

The damage taken is a massively important point to look for since any damage taken will be totalled up into a score and deducted from your total. Since a platinum medal is awarded based on the final score, it's important to be aware of the damage you're taking.

The best way to avoid taking damage is to use the dodge ability (tap **R2** / **R2**) as this will negate most attacks regardless of how much it looks like it struck you. This is the case even for the larger enemies and bosses whose attacks sometimes fill the screen.

Additionally, if you activate the dodge ability at the critical moment just before an attack will hit you will begin Witch Time, which slows time down dramatically and will allow you to unleash a powerful combo or two on your enemy. Try to do this as often as possible, since Witch Time provides a bonus to your combo, allows you to quickly dispatch a number of enemies (or one large one) and prevents you from taking damage.



HOW TO GET... EIGHT BRONZE TROPHIES AND A SILVER ONE IN JUST THREE HOURS!

Bayonetta's accolades are vast and varied, but a lot of them you won't be able to get until later on in the game. Here are some of the accolades that are possible to get earlier on...

PLATINUM! BRONZE

This is unlocked when you achieve ten platinum medals throughout the game. It's possible to achieve towards the end of the game since there are many sections where it's quite easy to achieve platinum. However, follow our tips on the opposite page and you should get this in no time.



FEELS GOOD, DOESN'T IT? BRONZE

This will take a little bit of work to get, so just keep going for torture kills and you'll get it eventually. The best way to activate these is to injure (but not kill) your enemies then move in closer towards them. If the prompt does not appear, then hit them once or twice until it does.



NICE TRY SILVER

This can be achieved the first time you come across an Umbra Witch statue. When the light appears around Bayonetta, press **R2** / **R2** to dodge and activate Witch Time. Wait for the clock to count down then repeat again and again until the accolade is yours.



TREAD NOT SO SOFTLY BRONZE

During Chapter 2, after you've met Luka, larger enemies with health bars will appear. Rather than fighting them as usual, jump on them and then jump again to propel yourself up. This will lower their health slightly so continue until their health depletes and the accolade will be yours.



THE DEEPEST CUT BRONZE

You'll unlock the Shuraba after you've found the second Angelic Hymns Gold LP. To activate lai-Jutsu you need to press and hold **△** / **◀** to charge up an attack. When an enemy is in range, release the attack and repeat until 20 are dead. This can also be done while in the air.



SEEKER OF MAGIC BRONZE

As you play the game you will collect halos from fallen enemies. Save up your halos to purchase techniques from the Gates of Hell store for Bayonetta to use. To afford three you'll need about 45,000 halos. To collect more halos, destroy decoration dotted around each level.



RECORD COLLECTOR BRONZE

As long as you keep an eye out for hidden items you should have no problem collecting the Record Collector accolade. The records often appear after you've defeated a particularly difficult group of enemies, but keep an eye out for some hidden chests, since they could be hiding in there.



JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME BRONZE

In Chapter 2 you will find yourself wandering around Vigrid town. As you pass through an archway a tramcar will pass you. Follow after it and a cut-scene will occur showing a flaming, runaway tram making its way towards you. When you regain control, simply jump over the tram as it passes.



FORTITUDO, BRINGER OF FLAME BRONZE

This is a secret accolade, but impossible to miss. Alongside it you'll also achieve the Chapters 1-4 accolade too, as defeating Fortitudo means you've also completed those four. If you're struggling taking on this boss, look out for the full walkthrough next issue.



Including: Modern Warfare 2, Uncharted 2: Among Thieves, Prototype /// Cheats

THE SECRET VAULT

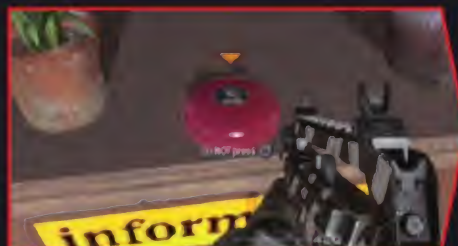
A post-ironic look at the world of PlayStation cheats and Easter eggs

Modern Warfare 2

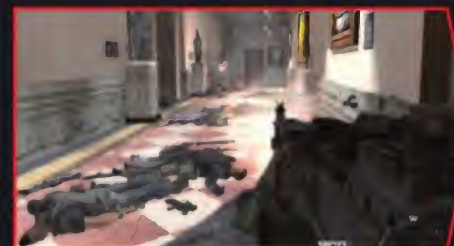
Night At The Museum



Step 1: Once you've finished *Modern Warfare 2* and watched the credits roll head back to the Mission Select screen and hit Museum.



Step 2: Here you'll find a museum full of displays marking events from the game. Load up on guns and hit the 'Do NOT Press' button.



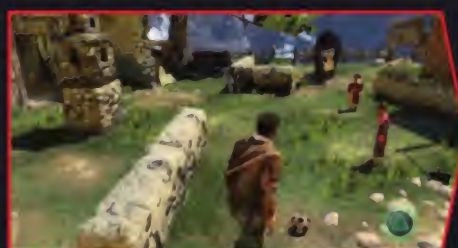
Step 3: Now all the displays will spring to life and try to kill you. Your mission is to stay alive for as long as possible and that's it.

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

Man of the people



Step 1: During Chapter 16, 'Where Am I?', take some time out to meet the people of the town. Start by sniffing a yak's bum.



Step 2: Pressing Δ next to villagers and animals gets Drake doing all sorts. He'll even play a little football with them.



Step 3: Funniest of all you can scare the bejesus out of some kids playing hide and seek by leaping out from behind a wall.

Prototype

Let's leg it



Step 1: Head to the right-hand building on the first street north of Central Park to find a mysterious severed leg.



Step 2: If you spot a couch with a landmark pick-up you've reached the right rooftop. Now have a little look around.



Step 3: Behind the green unit at the back of the roof you'll finally find the oddly placed leg. How did it get there? We'll never know.

LATEST CHEATS

WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010

PS3

By going to the options menu and selecting Cheat Codes you gain access to a whole bunch of cool unlocks. All codes are case sensitive.



Unlock The Rock
The Great One

Unlock Randy Orton's Extra Outfit
ViperRKO

Unlock Shawn Michael's Extra Outfit
Bow Down

Unlock Triple H's Extra Outfit
Suck It!

Unlock Santino Marella's Extra Outfit
Milan Miracle

Unlock John Cena's Extra Outfit
CENATION

Unlock New Backstage Brawl Stages
BonusBrawl

Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising

PS3

There are a whole bunch of bonus missions for you to try your hand at if you have the codes to unlock them.

Night Raid RaidT18Z
Coastal Stronghold StrongM577
Close Quarters CloseQ8M3



Ambush Encampment
Debris Field

AmbushU454
OFPWEB1
OFPWEB2

Star Wars: The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes

PS3

Head to the shop and enter these codes to unlock all sorts of imperial fun and games in *Republic Heroes*.



Big Heads

Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, Down, Up

Mini Gun

Down, Left, Right, Up, Right, Up, Left, Down

Ultimate Lightsaber

Right, Down, Down, Up, Left, Up, Up, Down

Spider Droid

Up, Left, Down, Left, Right, Left, Left, Left

Lightsaber Throw

Left, Left, Right, Right, Up, Down, Down, Up



DJ Hero

PS3

Head over to the Cheat Code menu in Options and enter these tasty treats for some major content droppage. Remember, these are case sensitive.

to10 Unlock All Content
k07u Unlock DJ AM
n1fz Unlock DJ Jazzy Jeff
oMxV Unlock DJ Shadow
5rtg Unlock DJ Z-Trip Presents mixes and character
Ami8 Unlock Grandmaster Flash
D1g? Unlock Daft Punk Tracks



Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?

PSP

Fancy something a little bit tougher than what this already rather challenging game has to offer you? Simply enter the following code in the Menu Screen. Enter it again to revert back to normal difficulty.

Hard Mode

L, R, L, R, L, R, L, R, L, R

An alternative opinion about great PlayStation games that doesn't ever reflect the views of Play magazine

それはどのようによかったか。

by Adolf Lungdrain

J'accuse!

VALKYRIA CHRONICLES

[KONAMI, PS3, 2008]

The chronicles of the ridiculous

Charm is a dangerous thing. Some of the worst, most evil people in the history of the world have been charming individuals. Saddam Hussein, Joseph Stalin, Idi Amin, Pol Pot, Hirohito, Adolf Hitler, King Leopold II of Belgium, Satan – they're all charming devils, one of them quite literally. And speaking of Hitler, isn't turning one of the most horrific and tragic wars of all time into a twee little anime story about the reds fighting the blues a bit of a weird thing to do? Yes it is, but if you're *Valkyria Chronicles* you can get away with it because of your charm.

Ooh look, it's like a watercolour and everyone's so nice and friendly

Underneath the paint, this is just like any other Japanese turn-based strategy RPG

to one another. Oh, and it's told through a story book. Bless. Somehow, the above aesthetic qualities had people believing that *Valkyria Chronicles* was some sort of massive innovator. But it's not. Underneath the paint or pastel or crayon or whatever it's supposed to be, this is just like any other Japanese turn-based strategy RPG. The one

difference is that you don't move your characters on a grid, but even that is hardly a huge leap forward. It shouldn't be, anyway.

It's not a blend of real-time and turn-based gameplay. Neither is it a blend of strategy game, RPG and third-person shooter. The game pauses when you aim, for crying out loud. You're not shooting, you are choosing where to aim. That's an ancient turn-based mechanic. Now put your pants back on and calm down.

Only the movement is real-time, and what's really annoying is that it's real-time even if you don't want to move. If you want to stay put

and shoot, you have to be super fast on the Aim button otherwise nearby enemies will

shoot you dead before you've even had your turn. And much of the time we don't want to move, because the movement control is really unwieldy. You can't even turn on the spot properly. Instead you're forced to run in a little circle, hoping your character will end up pointing the right way before you run out of AP and end up frozen on the spot. The

It doesn't look like a watercolour, it looks like a watercolour that someone's scribbled all over.



wrong spot. A spot where you're going to get shot.

And the cover system's rubbish too. You can only take cover behind set objects (sandbags mostly), and you can't duck unless you're taking cover, so it's impossible to order your troops to do something potentially life-saving like hiding behind a large crate. It's not sandbags sir, does not compute.

It's all so slow, which makes it even more upsetting when you make one small mistake after being on the same mission for two hours and have to start all over again. And heaven forbid that you forget to save it immediately before the mission, and so have to load up half a dozen cut-scenes just so that you can skip them, simply to get back to the beginning of the mission – never mind where you were when it all went wrong.

Oh, but it's so charming... sod off.



You can't even just ignore the pathetic story chapters and get on with the game. It's so tedious.



You have to destroy sandbags, otherwise enemies hiding behind them are hard to kill, even from point blank range.

Quiz answers

- 1) Resident Evil
- 2) Okami
- 3) Final Fantasy VIII
- 4) Fallout 3
- 5) Shinra
- 6) Everybody's Golf: World Tour
- 7) Mr Tumnus

- 8) Halle Berry
- 9) Darkstalkers
- 10) Thieves
- 11) Knight Automated Roving Robot
- 12) Subaru Impreza WRX STI
- 13) Burnout Paradise
- 14) The girlfriend
- 15) Twisted Metal

- 16) Adidas Power Soccer
- 17) SCE London Studio
- 18) Andy 'Take a Bow, Son' Gray
- 19) All 15
- 20) Lionel Messi

Results:

Add up your correct answers from the Play Quiz then refer to this chart to determine what tenuous animal you are.

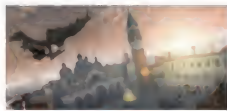
- 0) Tenuous at best
- 1-5) Like a cat: rubbish
- 6-10) Driving on – tenuously
- 11-15) Scoring... a goal... or something
- 16-20) As brilliant as a dog

PLAY³ PlayList

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you



PLAY³ TOP FIVE GAME GIFTS



top five NICK JONES

- 1 Dirty pantaloons (Dragon Age: Origins)
- 2 Tenth birthday poem (Fallout 3)
- 3 Joker teeth (Batman: Arkham Asylum)
- 4 Crowbar (Half-Life 2)
- 5 Da Vinci's flying machine (Assassin's Creed II)



top five GAVIN MACKENZIE

- 1 Ormagöden belt buckle (Brütal Legend)
- 2 Car sketch pad (EyePet)
- 3 Pip-Boy (Fallout 3)
- 4 Dancing bears (Civilization Revolution)
- 5 Diamond and pearl-encrusted skull (50 Cent: Blood On The Sand)



top five JON GORDON

- 1 Infernus (GTA IV)
- 2 Zeppelin solo (Brütal Legend)
- 3 Mercenaries mode (Resi 4)
- 4 Crown (Skate 2)
- 5 Crowbar (Half-Life 2)



top five IAN DRANSFIELD

- 1 Tedore incendiary (x4) revolver (Borderlands)
- 2 Gold Chocobo (Final Fantasy VII)
- 3 My war dog 'Shane' (Dragon Age: Origins)
- 4 The second wristblade (Assassin's Creed II)
- 5 The off button (Heroes Over Europe)



top five ALI INNES

- 1 Wah-wah pedal (UmJammer Lammy)
- 2 Ten-pin bowling game (EyePet)
- 3 Hospital scrubs (GTA IV)
- 4 Jack 6's toupee (Tekken 6)
- 5 The power to shoot bees from a hand (BioShock)

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
This FPS-adventure hybrid has been admirably translated to the PS3. The most atmospheric game of our time.		
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue*	183	90%
The combo system is so rich and deep that just learning one character will take you months. Arguably the studio's best work to date.		
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
The popular PC series makes its way to the PS3, so you can while away your hours playing this instead of doing important things.		
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DIRT	158	91%
Quite simply the second-best rally game on the PS3. Still, if simulation is what you're after then go for this over Sega Rally.		

game	issue	score
Colin McRae: DIRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Damnation	181	38%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dead Space	172	87%
Demon's Souls	182	91%
Tough and unforgiving, Demon's Souls is nevertheless a breath of fresh air in a very stagnant games market.		
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
It's just like playing Guitar Hero for the first time all over again, although DJ Hero is slightly more expensive.		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
The most recent Tiger Woods game may have been rubbish, but don't worry because Everybody's Golf is bloody brilliant.		
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%

game	issue	score
FIFA 10	184	90%
The best football game, marginally better. The crown held by PES seems like so long ago now.		
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
If you haven't already bought it, then stop reading this box, put your shoes on and go out and get it! The best game ever? Probably.		
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!		
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
World Tour just about manages to trump rival Rock Band with its entertaining music-creation tools, and quality peripherals.		
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
Iron Man	166	58%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever		
Lair	158	52%

Peripherals

Exspect Leather Flip Carry Case Price: £24.99

While this genuine leather carry case does offer some protection to your little PSPgo, it also fails to offer protection to either the **L** or **R** button and no extra storage for memory cards among other things. Basically, it's just shy of £25 but does very little beyond cover your PSPgo. Not recommended. ★★★★★

Exspect Leather Carry Case Price: £19.99

The flip carry case may offer more protection than this softer version, but the non-flip wins on account of it actually doing what it sets out to. It holds the PSPgo incredibly snugly and stops it from getting scratched or cosmetically damaged with a soft inner lining. The pull cord used to release the console is also genius. At £19.99 it is a bit pricey, though. ★★★★★



Astro Gaming A40 Audio System • Price: £199.95

It may be dear, but the quality of this system can't be doubted. We had issues with an excess of treble and there was some intermittent crackle but these small issues don't change the fact that this is an impressive headset. If you can afford it. An extra adapter is necessary for it to work on PS3, but this is cheap. ★★★★★



National Geographic Night Vision Goggles • Price: £9.99

Now for an MW2 theme: here we have a cheaper alternative to the £119.99 Prestige Edition's NVGs. They may be unofficial but we can't argue with the price. The fact is the novelty value of both the expensive and cheap NVGs is just about the same, so why not save yourself some hard-earned cash. ★★★★★



This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Assassin's Creed II PS3	89%	Dragon Ball: Raging Blast PS3	40%
DJ Hero PS3	91%	Tornado Outbreak PS3	56%
Modern Warfare 2 PS3	94%	Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! PS3	73%
LittleBigPlanet PSP	90%	What Did I Do To Deserve This? PSP	73%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time PS3	82%	Saw PS3	52%
Dragon Age: Origins PS3	82%	Comet Crash PSN	84%
Fairytale Fights PS3	51%	Digger HD PSN	52%
LocoRoco: Midnight Carnival PSP	81%	TMNT: Turtles In Time Re-Shelled PSN	57%
NBA 2K10 PS3	79%	.detuned PSN	50%
NHL 2K10 PS3	70%	Tank Battles PSN	68%
Beaterator PSP	72%		

game	issue	score
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
Create, share and play. Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer		
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played		
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotorStorm	151	92%
With the addition of an online multiplayer, MotorStorm gets the score it deserves, and currently leads the lines for the next gen.		
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
With its balls strapped firmly to the wall, Pacific Rift amplifies the drama of the original to create the PS3's best racing title.		
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2009	172	80%

game	issue	score
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	159	70%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	185	72%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Race Driver: Grid	167	85%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, Resistance 2 is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band could be the best rhythm-action game ever. Especially if you're playing with a group of friends. Even better after a few beers.		
Rock Band 2	179	96%
With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saw	186	52%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for Colin McRae. Not much in it, really.		
Sega Superstars Tennis	165	68%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
ShellShock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
Even the gimmicky appearance of Darth Vader can't spoil Soul Calibur IV. Another wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
The best beat-'em-up on the PS3, probably the best beat-'em-up ever, and maybe even the best game ever. Our poor little thumbs.		
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Tekken 6	184	94%
There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, nothing, stops Tekken 6 from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		

game	issue	score
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
It's a gorgeous game that'll make Beatles fans feel like they're being swaddled in a veil of pure joy. A breathtaking product.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
This unique FPS combines the best bits of Mafia and war films along with some highly innovative gameplay elements.		
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, Oblivion is an awesome game.		
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Five brilliant games for the price of one, what on Earth could be better than that? Nothing, that's what. Absolutely nothing.		
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X	177	75%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
Undisputed is gorgeous to look at, it's incredibly deep, and it's one of the most addictive fighters we've played in ages.		
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Among Thieves has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Pick-up-and-play gameplay strikes another blow, proving that the PS3 is currently at its best when it keeps it simple.		
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhawk	157	84%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2009	173	74%

*denotes import review

psp top fives

top five RACING



- 1 Burnout Legends
- 2 OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast
- 3 Ridge Racer
- 4 WipEout Pure
- 5 Sega Rally

top five SHOOT-'EM-UPS



- 1 Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops
- 2 Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror
- 3 Pursuit Force
- 4 Miami Vice
- 5 Rainbow Six Vegas

top five SPORTS



- 1 Virtua Tennis 3
- 2 Everybody's Golf 2
- 3 Football Manager Handheld
- 4 FIFA 07
- 5 Madden NFL 2006

top five RPG



- 1 Crisis Core - Final Fantasy VII
- 2 Tales Of Eternia
- 3 Breath Of Fire 3
- 4 Valkyrie Profile
- 5 Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?

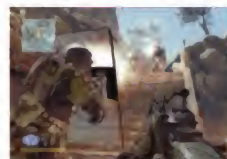
top five PLATFORM



- 1 LocoRoco
- 2 Metal Slug Anthology
- 3 LittleBigPlanet
- 4 Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins
- 5 Me And My Katamari

PS3 top fives

top five FPS



- 1 Modern Warfare 2
- 2 The Orange Box
- 3 Killzone 2
- 4 Unreal Tournament III
- 5 Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

top five RACING



- 1 MotorStorm: Pacific Rift
- 2 Sega Rally
- 3 Colin McRae: DIRT
- 4 Colin McRae DIRT 2
- 5 Need For Speed ProStreet

top five SPORTS



- 1 Virtua Tennis 3
- 2 Everybody's Golf 5
- 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2007
- 4 Fight Night Round 3
- 5 FIFA 09

top five ADVENTURE



- 1 Grand Theft Auto IV
- 2 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
- 3 Uncharted: Drake's Fortune
- 4 Assassin's Creed 2
- 5 Metal Gear Solid 4

top five SHOOT-EM-UP



- 1 The Club
- 2 GRAW 2
- 3 Super Stardust HD
- 4 Everyday Shooter
- 5 Kane & Lynch: Dead Men

game	issue	score
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2010	185	77%
Yakuza 3*	178	82%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%

PS STORE LISTING



1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3: Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%

Driver	171	90%
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With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, *Driver* made a huge impact in 1998. Despite rosy graphics, it's still a playable title.

Droplitz	184	91%
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Droplitz is a superb puzzler that blends Rez-style layers of music, pipes and dials to create one of the most satisfying puzzlers in years.

echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Everybody's Golf 2	62	83%
Fade To Black	09	44%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Flock!	179	70%

fIOW	151	90%
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Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. *fIOW* is an innovative title available on the Network.

Flower	176	85%
G-Police	27	84%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Kula World	172	71%
Lemmings	151	79%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%

Lumines Supernova	178	90%
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Probably the best puzzle game on the PSN, which is saying something because there's loads of competition.

Magic Carpet	179	65%
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Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
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This game has an astonishing amount to offer if you're prepared to plunge into its murky depths.

MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Motorhead	173	60%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pain	183	69%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%

PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
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The second game in the *PixelJunk* series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end!

Piyotama	162	62%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Spin Jam	174	32%

Syphon Filter	48	93%
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Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best.

Snakeball	176	92%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%

The Last Guy	171	91%
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Snake meets *Pac-Man* meets GoogleMaps. *The Last Guy* is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.

The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipeOut	01	89%
WipeOut HD	172	84%

Worms	179	91%
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There's a reason *Worms* is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay.

Zuma	182	78%
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PSP mini LISTING

Alien Havoc	186	68%
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Bloons	186	65%
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	186	45%
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	186	57%
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero of Sparta	186	57%
Kahoots	186	88%

Pinball Fantasies	186	90%
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It's like having an Amiga on your PSP, meaning it's brilliant even without the fact that the game is great.

Puzzle Scape	186	75%
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Tetris	186	93%
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How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.

Vampire	186	67%
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PSP LISTING



300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy	134	44%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bombberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%

Burnout Legends	134	94%
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Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, *Legends* is the best racing game on the PSP.

Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core - Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%





Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
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An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.


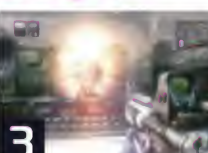





Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
F1 Grand Prix	134	81%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld	139	82%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Formula One 06	143	78%

game	issue	score
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gripshift	136	81%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
 <p>Bar some combat control issues, <i>GTA: Chinatown Wars</i> has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.</p>		
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
 <p>Successfully taking the <i>GTA</i> formula and putting it on one UMD of pure goodness, this is one of the PSP's best games.</p>		
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
 <p>Improving on its predecessor in every way, the only way <i>Vice City Stories</i> could be topped is if <i>San Andreas</i> comes to the PSP.</p>		
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman!	186	73%
What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
 <p>Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.</p>		
LocoRoco	143	94%
 <p>We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.</p>		
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medieval Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
 <p>We're not too clued up on retro games, but we do know our <i>Metal Slug</i> and the <i>Anthology</i> proves to be a great compilation.</p>		
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
 <p>More excellent card-based espionage starring everyone's favourite mule-head, with funky new cel-shaded graphics.</p>		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
 <p>A proper <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> game on a portable machine. It was never likely to disappoint, and it didn't. A great title.</p>		

game	issue	score
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	134	57%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
Need For Speed Most Wanted	136	73%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
 <p>The arcade classic comes to PSP and is just as good as it's ever been. The perfect game to play on a rainy Sunday afternoon.</p>		
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCRoIS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ - Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
 <p>Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, <i>Ridge Racer</i> still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system.</p>		
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
 <p><i>Unplugged</i> comes highly recommended. It's superb - there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.</p>		
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
 <p>Very nearly as good as its PlayStation 3 counterpart. Which is a good thing because that's the best rally game money can buy.</p>		
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%

game	issue	score
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
 <p>New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights themselves are as hectic and solid as ever. A portable delight.</p>		
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
 <p>In the absence of a 'real' <i>Metal Gear</i> game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job of it too.</p>		
Syphon Filter: Logan's Shadow	161	84%
Tales Of Eternia	138	85%
Tales Of The World	158	56%
Taito Legends	145	64%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
 <p><i>Tekken: Dark Resurrection</i> is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler.</p>		
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
WipeOut Pulse	159	86%
WipeOut Pure	138	91%
 <p>Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld <i>WipeOut</i> game could be, <i>Pure</i> is an essential PSP purchase.</p>		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

TOP TEN NETWORK GAMES

-  **Modern Warfare 2**
-  **LittleBigPlanet**
-  **Killzone 2**
-  **Unreal Tournament III**
-  **Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare**
-  **Uncharted 2: Among Thieves**
-  **MotorStorm: Pacific Rift**
-  **Warhawk**
-  **GTA IV**
-  **Street Fighter IV**

Bargain watch

Play scours the interweb for the tastiest deals



250GB PS3 Slim
With *Uncharted 2* and another game • Sony •
£284.99 • Blockbuster

If you're after a PS3 you could do a lot worse than this: a 250GB PS3 Slim, *Uncharted 2*, any EA game and one month's free rentals. **96% for Uncharted 2**



Eat Lead: The Return Of Matt Hazard
PS3 • D3 Publisher • £7.99 • Play.com

Alright, so we really don't like *Eat Lead* - it's not very good at all. But the opportunity to hear Gob Bluth's dulcet tones and the chance to laugh a couple of times is worth just under eight quid, isn't it? **38%**



The Orange Box
PS3 • EA • £9.99 • Smyths

This is a collection of some of the best games ever made, together, for less than a tenner. *The Orange Box* has featured on Bargain Watch before, and that's because every time it's cheap we get excited. It's worth so much more. **93%**



£20 Network Card
PS3 • Sony • £15.95 • Zavvi.com

It's hard to argue with this one: you're getting £20 for just under £16. There really isn't much else we can add to that, bar saying you'll be saving on every PSN purchase you make with the card. Textbook bargaining. **90%**

*denotes import review



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XBOX 360

Grand Theft Auto 4
Call Of Duty: Modern War 2
Wolfenstein
FIFA 10
Guitar Hero 5
Ghostbusters: The Video Game
Batman: Arkham Asylum
Need for Speed Most Wanted
Ashes Cricket 2009*
Transformers: Rev. of the Fallen
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warf.
Lego Batman
Need for Speed: Undercover
FIFA 09
Lego Indiana Jones: T.O.A.
Tomb Raider: Anniversary
Prototype
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey
WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2010
Need For Speed: Shift*
G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra
Kane and Lynch: Dead Men*
Need for Speed: Carbon
Need for Speed: Pro Street
Halo 3: ODS
Star Wars: Force Unleashed
Star Wars: Lego Star Wars 2
The Beatles: Rock Band
Call of Duty: World at War
WWE Smackdown vs Raw 08
Tom Clancy's S.C. Double Ag.*
Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2
Fuel
Red Faction: Guerrilla
Saints Row 2
Spider-Man 3*
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon R.
Section 8
Project Gotham Racing 4
Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion
Resident Evil 5
Colin McRae DiRT 2*
The Incredible Hulk

X-Men Origins: Wolverine
Lego Star Wars: Comp. Saga
Wet Risen*
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07*
UFC 2009 Undisputed
FIFA 07*
Fallout 3
Bully: Scholarship Edition
Harry Potter: Half-Blood Prince
Quantum of Solace*
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09
Silent Hill: Homecoming
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood
Fallout 3 Add-On Pack 2*
Peter Jackson's King Kong
X-Men: The Official Game
G-Force*
Forza Motorsport 3*
Tony Hawk's Project 8
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010*
Assassins Creed*
Band Hero*
Transformers: The Game
Command and Conquer 3*
Mercenaries 2: W. in Flames
Race Driver: Grid
Godfather
Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits
Mini Ninjas*
FlatOut: Ultimate Carnage*
Star Wars: The Clone Wars - RH
GTA IV: The Lost & Damned
Dead Space
Halo 3
WWE Smackdown vs Raw 09
Borderlands*
Trivial Pursuit*
Call of Duty 3
Saints Row
Tekken 6*
Star Trek: D-A-C

Plus Many More...

PS3

Grand Theft Auto 4
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2
Wolfenstein
FIFA 10
Guitar Hero 5
Ghostbusters: The Video Game
Batman: Arkham Asylum
Ashes Cricket 2009*
Transformers: Rev. of the Fallen
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warf.
Lego Batman
Need for Speed: Undercover
FIFA 09*
Lego Indiana Jones: T.O.A.
Prototype
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey
WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2010
Need For Speed: Shift*
G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra
Kane and Lynch: Dead Men*
Need for Speed: Carbon
Need for Speed: Pro Street
Star Wars: Force Unleashed
The Beatles: Rock Band
Call of Duty: World at War*
WWE Smackdown vs Raw 08
Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2
Fuel
Red Faction: Guerrilla
Saints Row 2
Spider-Man 3*
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon R.
Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion
Resident Evil 5
Colin McRae DiRT 2*
The Incredible Hulk
X-Men Origins: Wolverine
Lego Star Wars: Comp. Saga
Wet
Killzone 2
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07*
Fallout 3
Harry Potter: Half-Blood Prince
SingStar: Motown*
Quantum of Solace*
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood
G-Force*
Tony Hawk's Project 8
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010*
Assassins Creed*
Band Hero*

Transformers: The Game
Mercenaries 2: W. in Flames
Race Driver: Grid
Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits
Mini Ninjas*
Star Wars: The Clone Wars - RH
Dead Space
WWE Smackdown vs Raw 09
Borderlands*
Trivial Pursuit*
Call of Duty 3
Tekken 6*
Condemned 2*
Sonic's Ultimate Genesis Coll.
Tomb Raider: Underworld
Tom Clancy's HAWX
TNA Impact
Resistance: Fall of Man
Mortal Kombat vs DC Univ.
Midnight Club: Los Angeles*
Alimom Edge
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
Street Fighter IV
Guitar Hero 3: Leg. of Rock
Brutal Legend*
Sega Superstars Tennis
Far Cry 2*
WALL-E
Guitar Hero: World Tour*
Rock Band
Marvel: Ultimate Alliance
Ninja Golden Sigma 2
Beijing 2008*
Gran Turismo 5: Prologue
Dragon Age: Origins*
Up*
Madden NFL 10*
Sega Rally*
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008*
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground
WWE Leg. of Wrestlemania
Pro Evolution Soccer 2009*
FIFA 08*
Shaun White Snowboarding*
LOST: Via Domus*
Dark Sector*
Dark Resurrection (Tekken)
SingStar: Queen*
Skate 2
Everybody's Golf: World Tour*
The Bourne Conspiracy

Plus Many More...

PlayStation Portable

FIFA 10*
Transformers: Rev. of the Fallen*
Vice City Stories
Lego Batman*
Need for Speed: Undercover*
Tomb Raider: Anniversary*
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey*
WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2010
GTA: Liberty City Stories
Need for Speed: Pro Street*
Star Wars: Force Unleashed
Gran Turismo PSP
Star Wars: Lego Star Wars 2
G.T.A.: Chinatown Wars
Ben 10: Alien Force
WWE Smackdown vs Raw 08
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition
Star Wars: Battlefront 2
Colin McRae DiRT 2*
Dissidia: Final Fantasy
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Rock Band: Unplugged
Burnout Legends
SoulCalibur: Broken Destiny
God of War: Ch. of Olympus
FIFA 07
Football Manager Hheld '09

Plus Many More...

Wii

FIFA 10*
Guitar Hero 5
Ghostbusters: The Video Game
Ashes Cricket 2009*
Transformers: Rev. of the Fallen*
Lego Batman
Need for Speed: Undercover*
Lego Indiana Jones: T.O.A.
Tomb Raider: Anniversary*
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10
WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2010
G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra
MySims Agents*
Need for Speed: Pro Street
Star Wars: Force Unleashed
The Beatles: Rock Band*
Indiana Jones: Staff of Kings
WWE Smackdown vs Raw 08
Wii Sports Resort
Mario Kart Wii
Spider-Man 3*
Resident Evil 4*
Colin McRae DiRT 2*
Mario And Sonic Olympic Winte.
Lego Star Wars: Comp. Saga
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07*
Bully: Scholarship Edition

Plus Many More...

PlayStation 2

Grand Theft Auto: San Andr.
Harry Potter: Philosopher's S.
FIFA 10*
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
Guitar Hero 5
Ghostbusters: The Video Game
Need for Speed Most Wanted
Transformers: Rev. of the Fallen*
Need for Speed: Undergr. 2
Vice City Stories
007 Nightfire
Zapper
Lego Batman
Need for Speed: Undercover

Plus Many More...

NINTENDO DS

Professor Layton And Pand box.
FIFA 10*
Need for Speed: Undergr. 2
Lego Batman
Lego Indiana Jones: T.O.A.
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey*
WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2010*
Legend of Zelda: Phourglass
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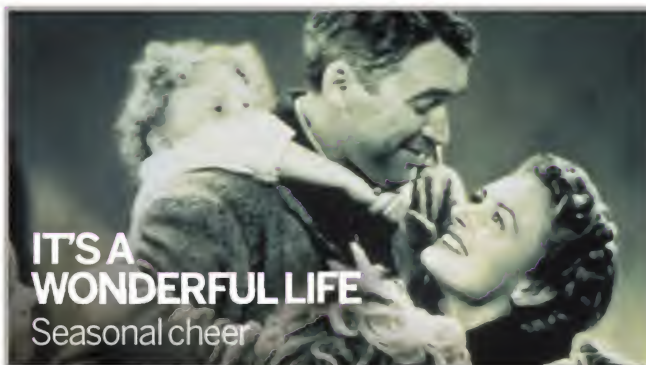
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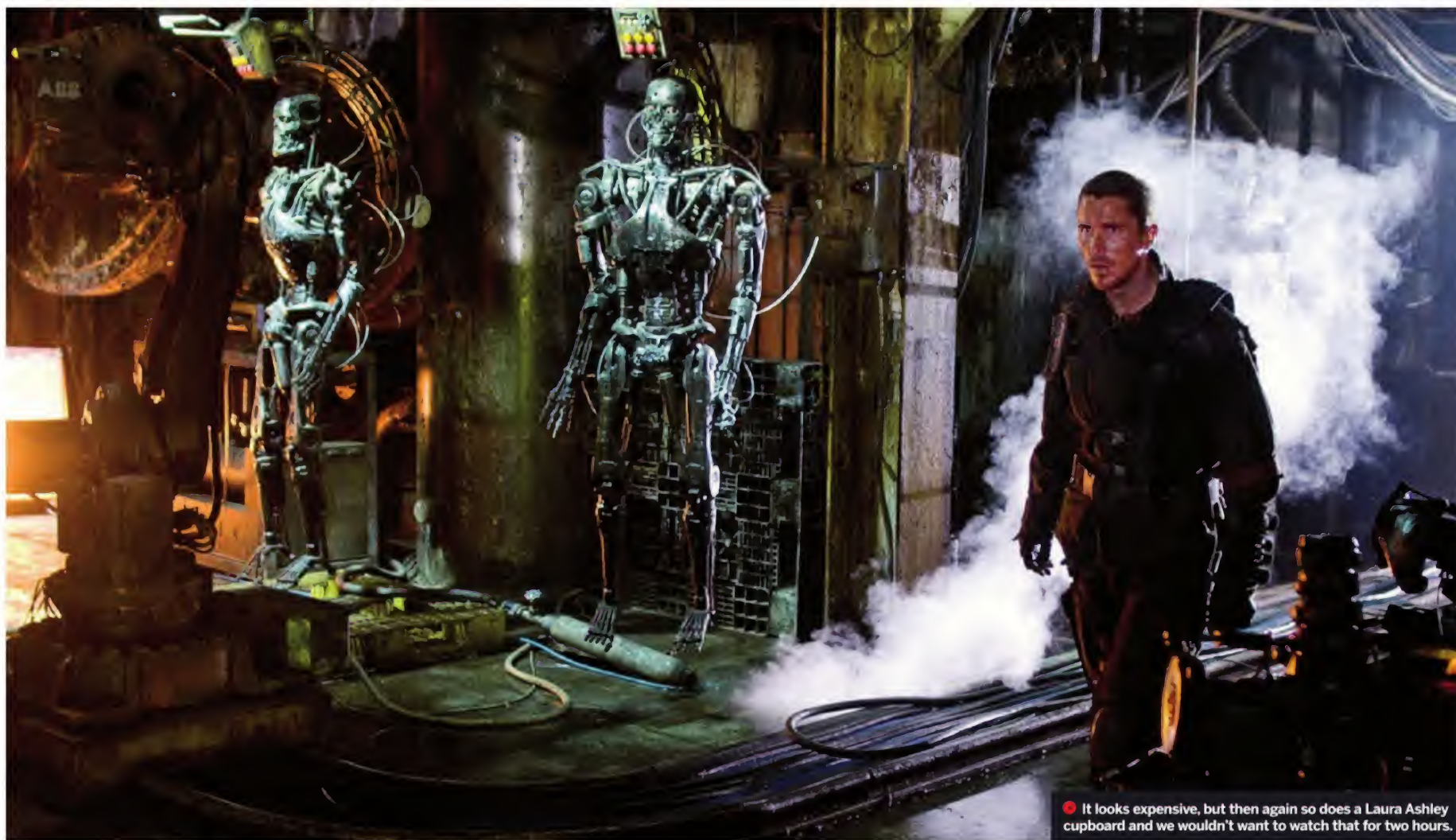
BRÜNO

A dash of Ali G and a hint of Borat...

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● It looks expensive, but then again so does a Laura Ashley cupboard and we wouldn't want to watch that for two hours.



DETAILS

Price
£24.99
Sound
DTS-HD 5.1
Director
McG
Starring
Christian Bale,
Sam Worthington,
Anton Yelchin

Terminator Salvation

Worthy of a rant of your own

The most challenging element of *Terminator Salvation*, the fourth instalment in the *Terminator* film series, is in trying to figure out exactly when Christian Bale had his now-infamous rant against a crew member. Trying to reconcile the several stunning plot holes in your own head while yet another tedious set piece plays out comes a close second.

Of course, criticising a film with the word 'Terminator' in its title for not being challenging is like commenting about the lack of red in the colour green. But, this being the first

Terminator movie to be set completely in the future when Skynet has reduced mankind to a disparate clan of rebels against the machine, there is a noticeable shift in sophistication and ambition. James Cameron's movies were thrillers that played on real fears of technological dependence and the threat of nuclear war, all the while breaking new ground in special effects. By contrast, McG's film, which cunningly serves as both prequel and sequel, seems more concerned with explosions and shouting. Telling the tale of John Connor, yet to fulfill his destiny as leader of the rebellion

against Skynet, as he tries to save a young Kyle Reese from the terminators with the aid of a mysterious new ally, *Salvation* plays out like a series of videogame-inspired set pieces that achieve very little besides making the audience immune to destruction. We're not sure there is a building or robot that, by the end of the film, hasn't been blown to smithereens and such is the mechanical presentation

of their demolition, it's an experience that becomes very tedious very quickly. For a story that is little more than an A-to-B action adventure, *Salvation* is at times also surprisingly senseless, both in terms of major plot points and minor details (you might notice that some of the terminators seem more reluctant to terminate than they otherwise might). Indeed, it's hard to decide what's more irritating: the several nonsensical sequences or Bale's sore-throated performance.

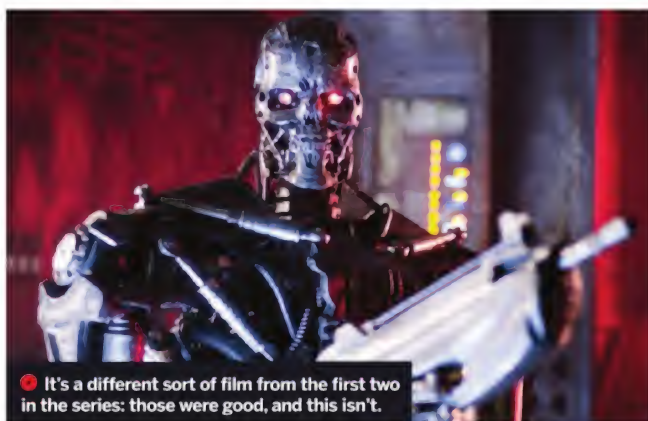
Few could argue that *Salvation*, with its high production values, is totally bereft of boons but even fewer would argue that it is anything more than a hugely underwhelming experience. This once great franchise has suffered its fair share of blows recently and although this might not prove to be the final one, a great deal of recovery will be needed before audiences are again excited by killer cyborgs from the future.

Aaron Asadi

VERDICT

It's been a while since killer robots were exciting and based on this we suspect that it will be even longer before they are so again.

RATING: ★★☆☆☆



● It's a different sort of film from the first two in the series: those were good, and this isn't.



DETAILS

Price
£24.99
Sound
DTS-HD 5.1
Director
Duncan Jones
Starring
Sam Rockwell, Kevin Spacey, Dominique McElligott

Moon

Sci-fi with a difference

WITH HOLLYWOOD FULL of transforming cars, schoolboy wizards and evil alien invaders, it's nice to see a somewhat more subdued sort of sci-fi make an appearance. Every inch a genre film made by genre fans, *Moon* is a welcome antidote to the high-octane craziness that has defined big-budget cinema for over a decade.

Set on a moon-based mining station, *Moon* follows the increasingly creepy experience of Lunar employee Sam Bell as his three-year tenure on the big ball of cheese nears its end. Accompanied only by a HAL-inspired talking computer and prerecorded video messages from his loved ones, Bell struggles to keep his grip on reality and it's not long before he's investigating a mysterious appearance of... himself. For the most part it's intriguing stuff, too, with Rockwell doing a fine job of conveying the desperate circumstances of our beleaguered hero and director Jones concocting



It's nice looking but, unlike 2001, the style isn't supported by engaging ideas.

a believably cold and troubling atmosphere that's neither too far flung or too fantastical to believe in.

Moon is, however, a very slight experience. The story is too thin to fully engross and despite its sophisticated sheen, there's very little depth or real intelligence. Jones clearly holds the work of Kubrick in high regard and yet while this is unquestionably a film the great director's admirers will enjoy more than the afore-referenced popcorn feasts it is too light on substance. Many will be impressed but far less will be able to convincingly assert that this is anything more than sound entertainment. **AA**

RATING: ★★★★★



DETAILS

Price
£33.99
Sound
DTS-HD 5.1
Director
Martin Campbell
Starring
Antonio Banderas, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Anthony Hopkins

The Mask Of Zorro/The Legend Of Zorro boxset

A classic duo unmasked on Blu-ray

EVEN BEFORE JACK Sparrow drunkenly jiggered on the decks of the Black Pearl, the swashbuckling blockbuster had been experiencing something of a revival, thanks in part to Martin Campbell's eminently likeable *Zorro* films. Starring Antonio Banderas as the legendary sword-fighting derring-doer and Catherine Zeta-Jones as his love, the films have more than enough style, adventure and humour to be seen as legitimate precursors to the *Pirates* phenomenon.

The first film, too, would certainly merit the accolade, it being superior to any of the Bruckheimer seafaring extravaganzas, both as an adventure in its own right and as a film that pays due respect to its forbearers. Filled with hearty stunts and awash with charisma, *The Mask Of Zorro* follows a vengeful brother's quest to take on the mantle of Zorro from his ageing – and equally vengeful – mentor, de la Vega. Boosted by a convincing and suitably fun romantic subplot that sees our hero-in-waiting fall for de la Vega's estranged daughter, this is a remarkably entertaining and well-balanced movie, the likes of which are seen far too infrequently for our tastes.



Banderas is a terrific choice for Zorro, as would Gavin have been.

Sadly for the series, and despite having some impressive set pieces, *The Legend Of Zorro* lacks the original's pace. With a more family-oriented story, the sort of exciting struggles that defined the first movie have been replaced by disappointingly predictable scenes and a forgettable villain. The talent of its actors and the straightforward action make the boxset a worthwhile purchase but there can be little question about which of the two films will warrant more viewings. **AA**

RATING: ★★★★★



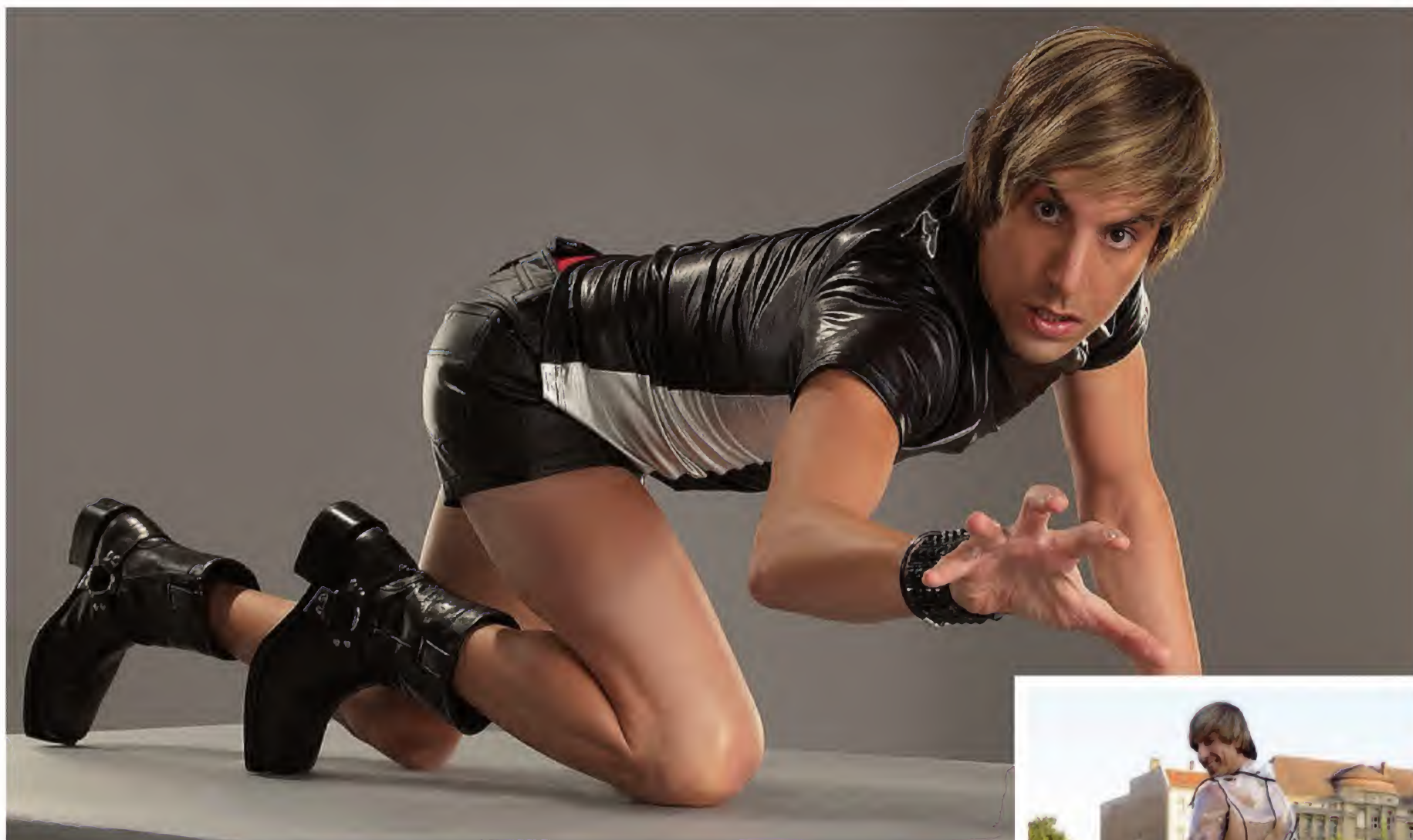
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WEBSITE: hmv.com
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PRICE: £9.99
WEBSITE: hmv.com
- 4 Terminator 2: Judgment Day**
A slick presentation of a thrilling sci-fi actioner. A must-own title.
PRICE: £6.99
WEBSITE: play.com
- 5 Band Of Brothers**
A heavy-duty boxset at a shockingly affordable price point.
PRICE: £17.99
WEBSITE: play.com



Coming soon

- 1 Surrogates**
Another comic-book adaptation comes to BD, but one with a more intriguing premise than others of its ilk. John McClane stars.
ANTICIPATION: ★★★★★
- 2 Stardust**
Good hearty adventures are hard to come by and this one just about comes in on the right side of *The Princess Bride*.
ANTICIPATION: ★★★★★
- 3 Funny People**
A drama about comedy or a comedy with drama in it? Who knows? Certainly the star power makes this a tempting release.
ANTICIPATION: ★★★★★
- 4 The Taking Of Pelham 123**
Two big acting powerhouses face off in this flashy remake. Tony Scott fans should be excited.
ANTICIPATION: ★★★★★
- 5 Doctor Who: The Complete Specials**
A collection of the *Doctor Who* specials, as the Beeb bids a fond farewell to one of its better doctors.
ANTICIPATION: ★★★★★



DETAILS

Price
£24.99
Sound
DTS-HD
Director
Larry Charles
Starring
Sacha Baron Cohen,
Paula Abdul,
Harrison Ford

Brūno

Candid humour

It's not often you can label a film that features an exercise bike-powered dildo as clever. There is, though, no denying that this follow-up to the highly acclaimed *Borat* is a smart movie and is so because of its crudeness rather than in spite of it.

The film, rather predictably, follows Brūno, an Austrian fashionista on a desperate quest to become famous in the US of A. He is a wildly extravagant individual who places more importance on designer belts than he

lends itself well to a fair share of slapstick laughter, though, *Brūno* is more interesting – and arguably funnier – when it uses its central character to illustrate how detached the modern celebrity lifestyle, or at least how it's presented in the media, is from the more important issues of everyday life. Unquestionably, the film is at its best when conjuring up new and genuinely humorous ways to convey the notion, be it Paula Abdul sitting on a Mexican chairperson or Brūno

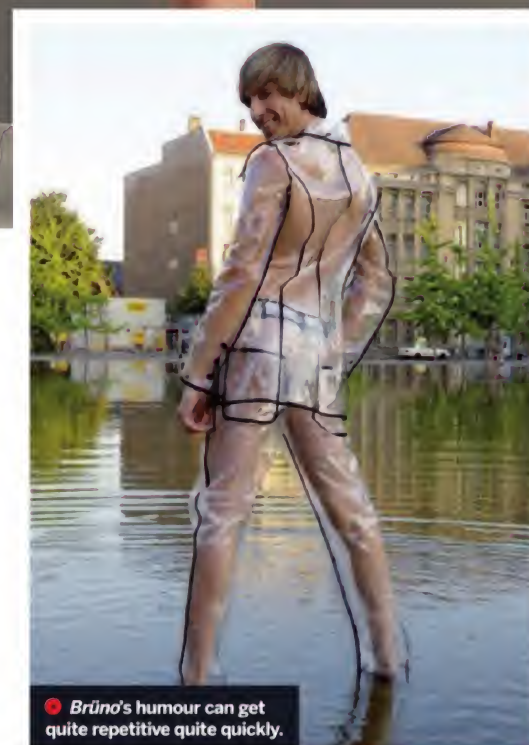
trying to unite Israel and Palestine with a suitably dreadful charity song.

Disappointingly, it is a message that can too frequently be distracted by

Due to its ambition and intelligence, *Brūno* is superior to most other recent Hollywood comedies

would world peace and is far from aware of the cartoonish, homosexual stereotype he effortlessly reinforces at every turn. With Brūno Cohen has created a genetically modified reproduction of every Gok-wannabe to feature on TV in the last five years with a Dolce & Gabbana handbag where his brain should be and a nine-carat diamond in place of his heart. While this extreme personality

more base humour and get lost among the more predictable set pieces that expose yet another redneck as a homophobe. And even when the film avoids these pitfalls, it's still not as consistently funny as you might hope with giggles rather than guffaws the order of the day. Also, there is a tad too much repetition, with more or less every scene playing out towards a familiar ending; regardless of the



● *Brūno's* humour can get quite repetitive quite quickly.

outrageousness of the sequences, the sense of 'been here before' is too apparent to ignore.

Simply by virtue of displaying more ambition and intelligence, *Brūno* is superior to most other recent Hollywood comedies. It doesn't, though, offer enough bellyaching laughs, or enough variety in the sort of gags it employs, to be thoroughly recommended.

Aaron Asadi

VERDICT

With more sexual positions on show than in the karma sutra, *Brūno* is sensationalist entertainment – but it is at least so with one eye on making a worthwhile point.

RATING: ★★★★★

Blu-ray Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

Competition

The Sopranos: Season 1

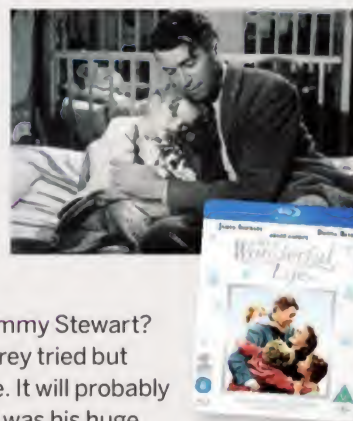
PRICE: £49.99
SOUND: Dolby 5.1
DIRECTOR: Various
STARRING: James Gandolfini, Lorraine Bracco, Edie Falco



It might have marked a new dawn of quality television drama but for all the fanfare, *The Sopranos* doesn't actually offer anything that we hadn't seen on bigger screens before. That said, there really is no harm in investing in a show with such well-written characters played by such accomplished actors. The same, too, can be said of a show with such measured and frequently exciting plotlines, which this most undoubtedly has. **AA**
RATING: ★★★★★

It's A Wonderful Life

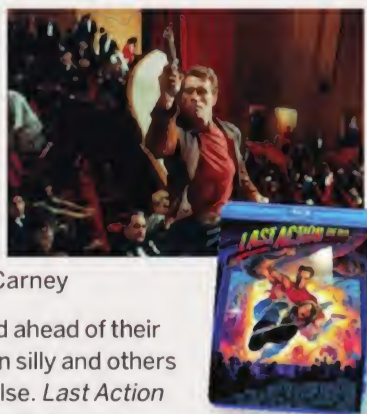
PRICE: £19.99
SOUND: Mono
DIRECTOR: Frank Capra
STARRING: James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore



Did we ever get a new Jimmy Stewart? Tom Hanks and Jim Carrey tried but we're still waiting for one. It will probably be a long wait, too, such was his huge talent and likeability, as showcased in this Yuletide treat. Following George Bailey as he tries unsuccessfully to leave Bedford Falls, *It's A Wonderful Life* is deservedly revered as a seasonal classic and much of that is owed to the terrific central performance from Mr Stewart. **AA**
RATING: ★★★★★

Last Action Hero

PRICE: £19.99
SOUND: DTS-HD
DIRECTOR: John McTiernan
STARRING: Arnold Schwarzenegger, F Murray Abraham, Art Carney



Some films are released ahead of their time, some are just plain silly and others are good fun and little else. *Last Action Hero*, though, is all three. Following super-cop Jack Slater as he's sucked into the real world through a dimension portal, McTiernan's action comedy is often inventive but not much else. The action is tame and the in-jokes get tiresome, which ultimately makes for unforgettable yet oddly average entertainment. **AA**
RATING: ★★★★★

Step Brothers

PRICE: £19.99
SOUND: TrueHD
DIRECTOR: Adam McKay
STARRING: Will Ferrell, John C Reilly, Mary Steenburgen



Will Ferrell, like most *SNL* superstars, has become quite boring. The scrappy but charming comedies on which he used to be able to rely seem fewer and farther between, while the scrappy and charmless comedies that make up the other entries in his filmography are more frequently rearing their tedious heads. This film about two middle-aged stepbrothers is one of the latter, with the messy plot and irritating silliness outnumbering the good gags by ten to one. **AA**
RATING: ★★★★★

WIN! 10 copies of District 9 up for grabs!

Win a copy of the spectacular new blockbuster!

PLAY AND SONY Pictures Home Entertainment have teamed up to give ten lucky readers a copy of *District 9* on Blu-ray.

From producer Peter Jackson, *District 9* debuts on Blu-ray and DVD on 28 December from Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. The critically acclaimed science-fiction thriller took cinema audiences by storm earlier this year and is now set to have an even bigger impact in the home-entertainment market. Director Neill Blomkamp enlists a cast of relative newcomers, including Sharlto Copley and Jason Cope, and a host of groundbreaking special effects for an action film that has plenty of brains as well as brawn.

Bonus materials on the Blu-ray and DVD include commentary with director/co-writer Neill Blomkamp, deleted scenes and the three-part documentary 'The Alien Agenda: A Filmmaker's Log'.

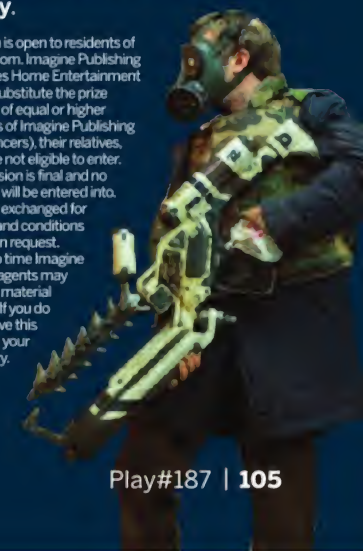
To be in with a chance of winning *District 9* on Blu-ray all you have to do is answer the following question:

Peter Jackson directed which epic fantasy series? Was it:

- The Neverending Story
- The Pokémon movies
- The Lord Of The Rings trilogy

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HD Reviews TVs and sound systems that'll make your gaming come to life



Sony KDL-37W5500
PRICE: £679
SCREEN SIZE: 37in
RESOLUTION: 1,920 x 1,080
WEIGHT: 15.5KG

While there's not a huge amount to get excited about with this latest BRAVIA over other TVs of a similar price, it is at least a very decent product. The cause of distinction derives mainly from the impressive BRAVIA Engine 3 and the W5500 also offers quality picture, fantastic colour and very few reasons to look elsewhere. ★★★★★



Sony BDP-S760
PRICE: £380
AUDIO: 7.1 channel
VISUAL: 1,920 x 1,080
DIMENSIONS: 430 x 246 x 70

No matter how many add-ons and gizmos are thrown into a Blu-ray player, it's how the tech handles the discs that counts. Sony's latest BD player focuses on just this aspect, too, making for a refreshing release in a market that's often seen as very keen to confuse. Of course, there is the matter of why PS3 owners should invest in a second BD player but the quality of the picture and sound from this player should go some way towards justifying the purchase. ★★★★★



Toshiba 37XV635D
PRICE: £599
SCREEN SIZE: 37in
RESOLUTION: 1,920 x 1,080
WEIGHT: 15.38KG

Credit where it's due: Toshiba simply refuses to give up on standard-def, as evidenced by its series of upscaling DVD players and this TV, which upscales any SD source through its Resolution+ technology. As an HD product, however, this isn't as impressive as you might hope. The HD image isn't as sharp as it would be on many other sets with a similar price tag and although black levels are decent enough motion blur is noticeable. ★★★★★

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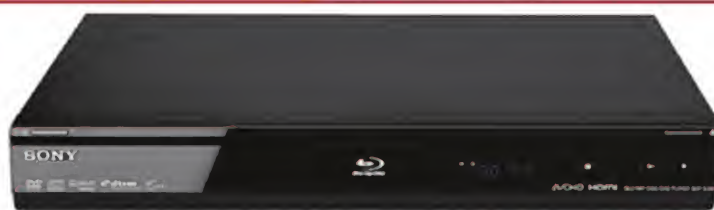
Sony BD-VE300

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- 1000W Total Power Output
- iPhone / iPod Dock Included

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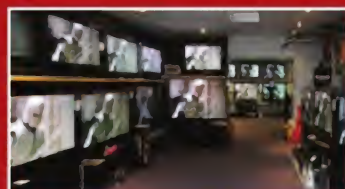
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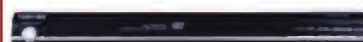
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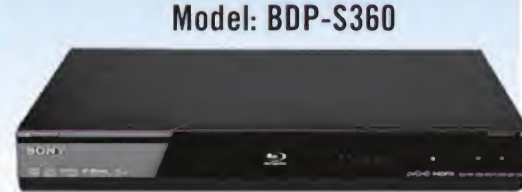
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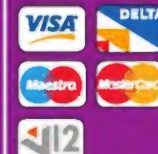
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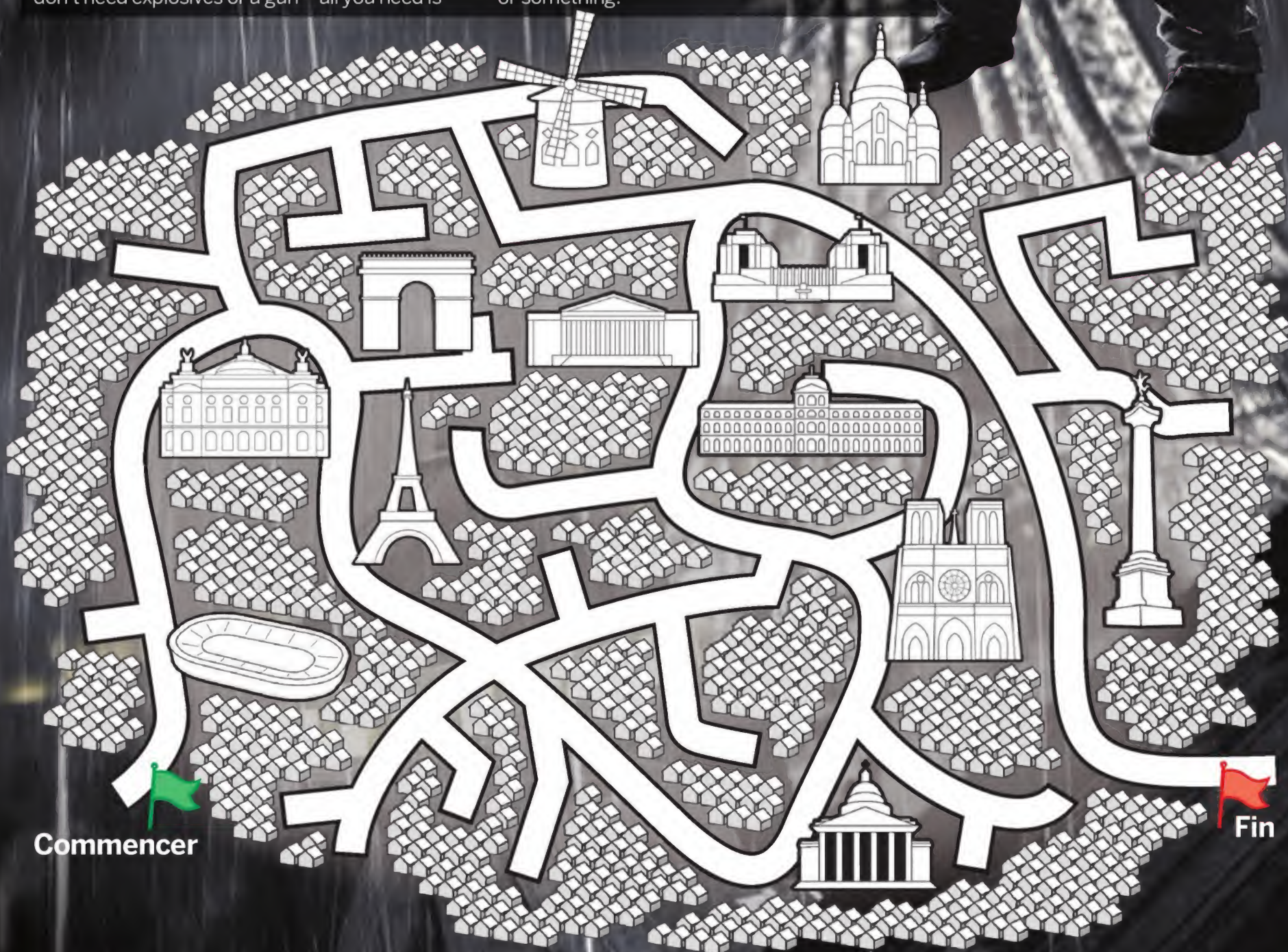
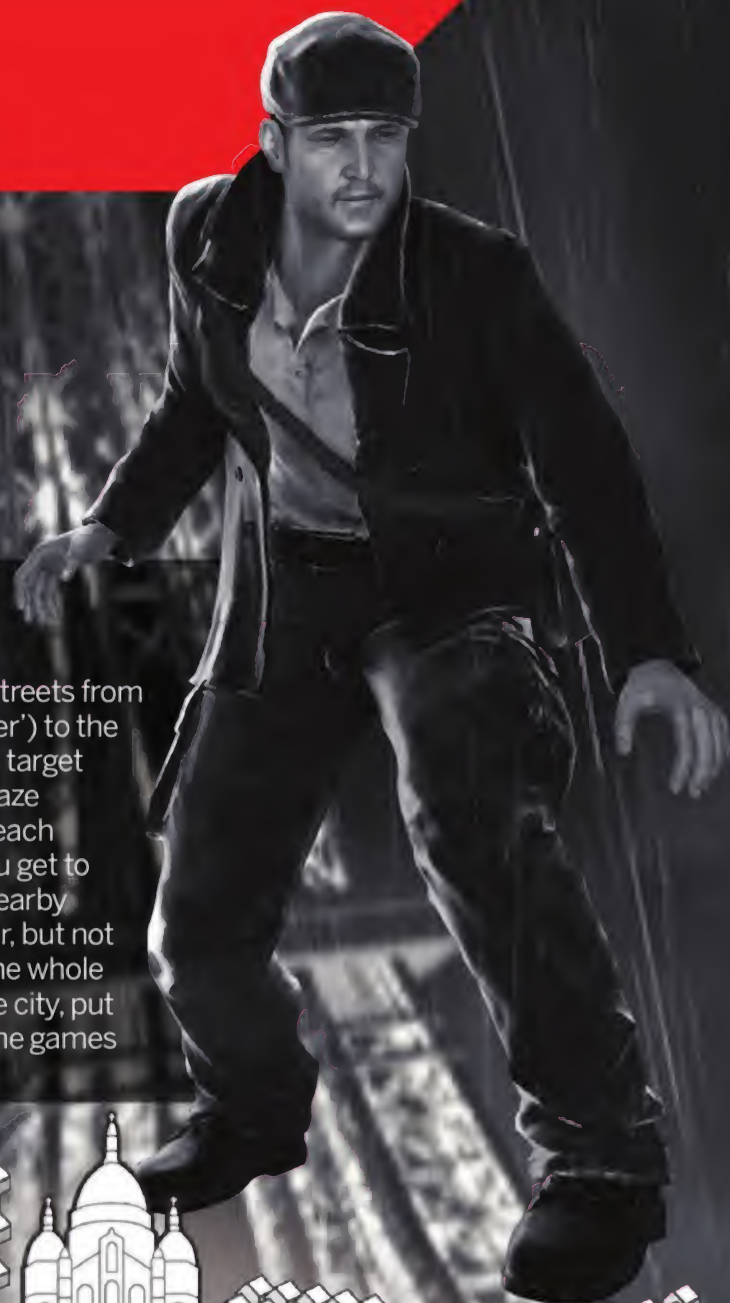
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LE LABYRINTHE DES SABOTEUR

BONJOUR, NOS AMIS! We don't speak French, so we'll let our English do the rest of the talking. You might think that *The Saboteur* is a game about shooting Nazis, blowing things up and hanging around in can-can dancers' dressing rooms, and it is, a bit. Mostly, though, *The Saboteur* is a good old-fashioned game of colouring in, as you can see from the exclusive demo on this very page.

The Nazi occupation of Paris has turned the entire city black and white and it's up to you to return The City Of Love back to full colour by completing a series of objectives at some of the French capital's most famous landmarks. You don't need explosives or a gun – all you need is

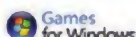
some crayons, felt-tip pens or coloured pencils. Use a pen or pencil or whatever to trace your way through the maze of Parisian streets from the start (where it says 'Commencer') to the finish (where it says 'Fin') via all the target locations. But this is no ordinary maze – here comes the twist – because each time you reach a target location you get to colour it in, along with a bunch of nearby houses. Doesn't matter what colour, but not black, white, brown or grey. Once the whole map's coloured in you can leave the city, put the mag down and go and play some games or something.





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